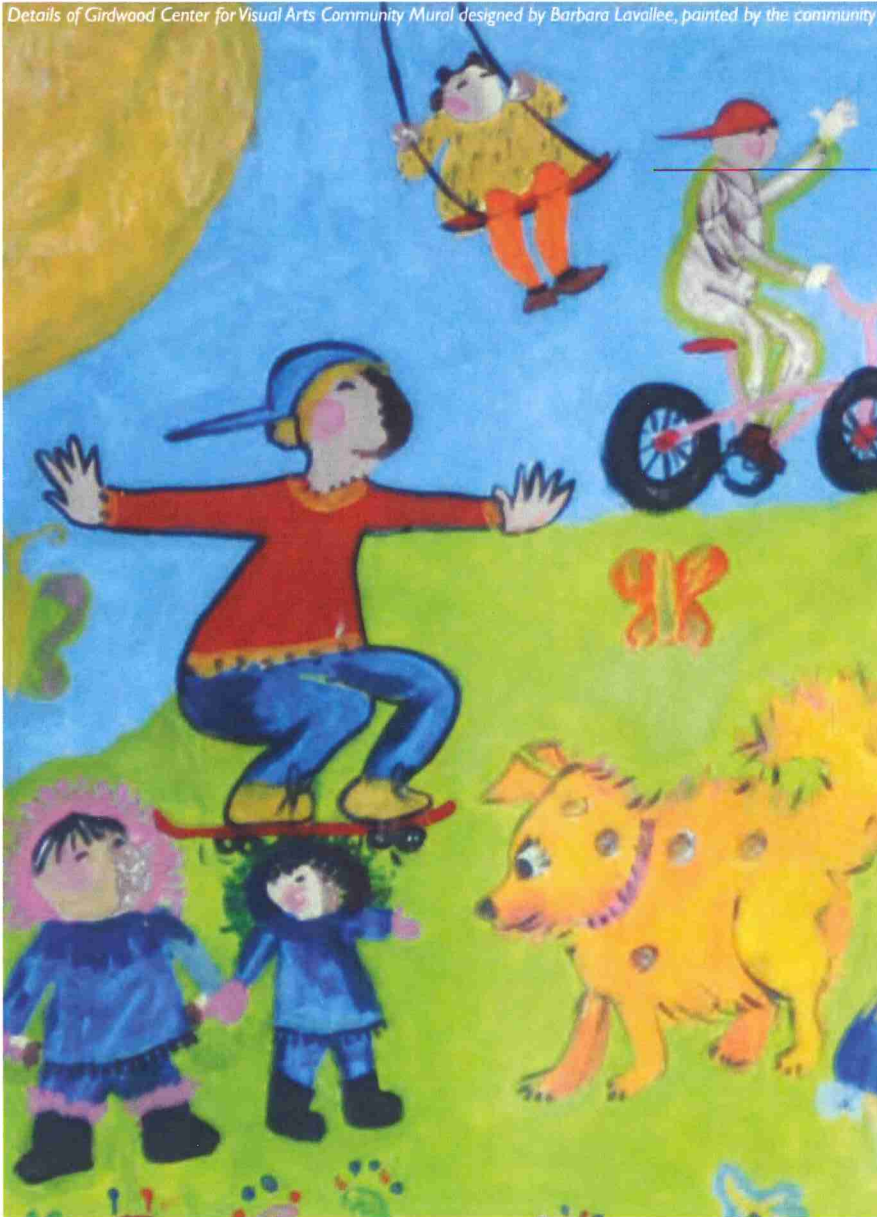


Details of Girdwood Center for Visual Arts Community Mural designed by Barbara Lavalée, painted by the community



## Girdwood South Townsite Area Plan

### Draft 2014 Amended Plan Municipality of Anchorage

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# GIRDWOOD South townsite



2014- 0123

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## List of Acronyms

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ADOT&PF	Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
AHFC	Alaska Housing Finance Corporation
AMC	Anchorage Municipal Code
AWWU	Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility
CAT Plan	Commercial Areas and Transportation Plan
CEA	Chugach Electric Association
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
GAP	Girdwood Area Plan
GBOS	Girdwood Board of Supervisors
GC-5	Girdwood Commercial
GCR-1	Girdwood Commercial Recreation
GLUC	Girdwood Land Use Committee
GOS	Girdwood Open Space
GPI-p	Girdwood Public and Institutional Lands and Parks
HLB	Heritage Land Bank
MOA	Municipality of Anchorage
OS&HP	Official Streets and Highway Plan
P&ZC	Planning and Zoning Commission
PM&E	Project Management and Engineering
ROW	Rights-Of-Way
Title 21	Anchorage Municipal Charter, Code and Regulations







## 2014 AREA PLAN AMENDMENT FORWARD

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The Girdwood South Townsite Area Plan is a plan specifically required by Chapter 9 (the Girdwood Chapter) of Title 21 of the Anchorage Municipal Code. Within Girdwood, there is a three-tiered planning process. The top tier is the Girdwood Area Plan. It was completed in 1995 and is overdue for an update. The second tier consists of Area Master Plans, which are intended to provide more specific guidance than the Girdwood Area Plan for significant sub-units within the community of Girdwood. The South Townsite Area Plan is such a plan and was approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission in 2009, subject to a number of conditions. The third tier of planning consists of Development Plans, which are intended to provide very detailed information regarding development of some sub-set of an Area Plan. No development plans have yet been prepared for areas within the Girdwood South Townsite Area. Additional information about the planning context and code requirements can be found in Chapter 5, The Planning Context, of this document. In AMC Title 21, the requirements can be found in 21.09.030.E.1.

This update to the Girdwood South Townsite Area Plan was triggered by a need to upgrade Egloff Drive in support of the library, fire station, and future development. The community desired corridor for Egloff Drive (in which it currently exists) conflicts with the route identified in the 2009 Girdwood South Townsite Area Plan. A failure to update the plan identifying the revised corridor will either postpone or terminate plans for roadway improvements that are planned for construction in 2015.

There are several reasons the community is seeking an alternate route for Egloff Drive than the route identified in the 2009 plan. The reasons include:

- The 2009 plan mistakenly identified property adjacent to the Alyeska Highway and to Egloff Drive as commercially developable property. The property is, in fact, dedicated parkland and not suitable for roadway development or other uses identified in the plan.
- The 2009 plan mistakenly suggested that the roadway could not be developed in the 200-foot wide Patent Easements associated with Glacier Creek or California Creek.
- The roadway corridor identified in the 2009 plan will eliminate play areas, a community center, the local radio station, a ball field and other uses that are very desirable in the community with little promise of the benefits identified in the 2009 plan.

- The proposed roadway corridor of the 2009 plan would serve the back of the new library and the soon-to-be refurbished Fire Hall instead of the front.
- The 2009 proposed corridor would bisect the area between the school and the library which is heavily used by children.

This 2014 plan amendment was originally envisioned to simply address the revised roadway corridor and to incorporate the Conditions of Approval established by the Planning and Zoning Commission in 2009. Although approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission in 2009, the plan has never been completely finalized. A listing of those conditions and the Municipal review comments on which conditions were based can be found in Appendix G of this document. In the course of preparing the plan update, it quickly became apparent that the update offered the opportunity to amend a number of aspects of the plan which had either become outdated or were identified as being inaccurate. Perhaps more importantly, this update of the plan has provided the community of Girdwood an opportunity to modify the plan to better reflect community desires and conditions.

To accomplish this goal, DOWL HKM has worked closely with the Municipal Planning Department, the Heritage Land Bank, and with the Girdwood South Townsite Area Plan subcommittee of the Girdwood Land Use Committee. Some of the important changes to the plan include the following:

1. Proposed realignment of Egloff Drive: The 2009 Plan calls for re-naming Egloff Drive to Hightower Road to match the road naming on the north side of Alyeska Highway. The updated plan calls for maintaining the platted name for the road as Egloff Drive and maintaining current roadway alignment for the reasons identified above. The 2009 plan envisioned a vibrant Main Street (Hightower Road) that would cross Alyeska Highway and extend south through the South Townsite Area. The current community vision for the South Townsite area is oriented to civic and park uses with some supporting commercial development. A suitable Collector roadway with good pedestrian facilities is more in keeping with the envisioned development.
2. Downplay or eliminate plan recommendations for development of city-owned and maintained parking areas in the South Townsite Area. The parking areas in the North Townsite that are owned and maintained by the city are underutilized, except during key events, and expensive to maintain. There is enough land in the South Townsite that individual developments,

whether civic or private, can provide and maintain their own parking rather than relying on the City to provide this service. On-street parking can be provided on Egloff Drive and a future Karolius Drive that could satisfy some parking needs without significantly increasing maintenance requirements.

3. Downplaying or eliminating the traffic calming options identified at the intersection of Egloff Drive and Alyeska Highway. Although desired by the community, these options were rejected by the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT & PF) in favor of possible roundabout intersections. Because of grading concerns and impacts to local businesses and parks, roundabout intersections on the Alyeska Highway are very unlikely. ADOT & PF indicated in their comments that if there is a strong local desire to further reduce speed and include traffic calming on the Alyeska Highway, the Municipality should take responsibility for the roadway including maintenance and repairs.
4. Updating references to roadway and utility projects: A number of the projects identified within the 2009 plan as “planned” have since been completed. The plan amendment notes those projects that have been completed.
5. Addressing fire access and a second access into the South Townsite Area in support of future development. The 2009 plan suggested a “Ladder” type of roadway development plan that was supposed to provide the necessary second access into the South Townsite for emergency access. This was never fully vetted with the Fire Department and required a new access point to the Alyeska Highway very close to California Creek. The new access point would traverse parkland and wetlands. This is not acceptable to the community and as a result, it is not considered a viable alternative. Further, the Fire Department has suggested that the ladder scheme would not provide an adequate second access per code. The plan update acknowledges that full development of the Girdwood South Townsite will require a second access at some point in the future and identifies two alternatives for that access.
5. The 2009 plan anticipated an imminent housing boom in Girdwood and with that, rapidly expanding commercial development. Five years later, very little of the anticipated development has come to fruition. The amended plan takes a more conservative approach to future development and avoids identification of specific locations for specific development types.

6. Updates to graphics that depict the newly platted Girdwood South Townsite Area. Since 1965 the South Townsite Area was platted in a pattern that has come to be known as the Squirrel Cages. In 2013, the Heritage Land Bank re-platted the area into five large tracts that are far more suitable to future development. The amended plan has updated most graphics to reflect the newly platted boundaries.
7. Incorporates, to the extent possible, the conditions imposed by the Planning and Zoning Commission in 2009 and Municipal review comments that are still pertinent.

## **What This Plan Does**

This plan fulfills the requirements identified in Chapter 9 of the Anchorage Municipal Code, Title 21 for Area Plan Development, as identified in 21.09.030.E, Area Master Planning. Within the Girdwood community, an area master plan is required before more specific development plans can be prepared. The Anchorage Heritage Land Bank (HLB) controls most of the property within the Girdwood South Townsite area. The purpose of the Area Plan is to facilitate the planned development of large tracts of land under unified ownership or control, prior to subdivision or development of entire tracts or parcels within large tracts, in order to provide for land use compatibility and development responding to site-specific environmental constraints and opportunities. The area master plan establishes the general arrangement of land uses, circulation and infrastructure systems for the identified development areas.

The Girdwood South Townsite Area Plan identifies proposed vehicular and pedestrian circulation and the types of acceptable proposed development. Note that all land in the Girdwood South Townsite area has been previously zoned and the allowable uses in those zones are delineated in AMC 21.09.040, Zoning Districts. A map showing those districts can be found in Chapter 4, page 4.3.

## **What This Plan Does Not Do**

Although the plan does attempt to identify specific locations for specific land use types, such as a golf course, grocery store, and residential development. The actual location of specific land use types is market driven. If a specific use is desirable to the community and compatible with other proposed uses in the area, the plan may identify that as a permitted use within the area identified. The plan may encourage the location of specific land uses, but it cannot dictate that a specific use will occur at a specific location. The GCR-1 zoning district found in the South Townsite Area is an example of this. The GCR-1 zone is a Golf Course/Nordic Ski Course District. The Girdwood communi-



ty has rejected the idea that this area should be developed as a golf course, however the golf course use is codified in Title 21. The narrow zoning designation limits other potentially acceptable uses in the area. This 2014 Area Plan Amendment has generally avoided identification of specific locations for specific uses.



# **Girdwood South Townsite Master Plan**

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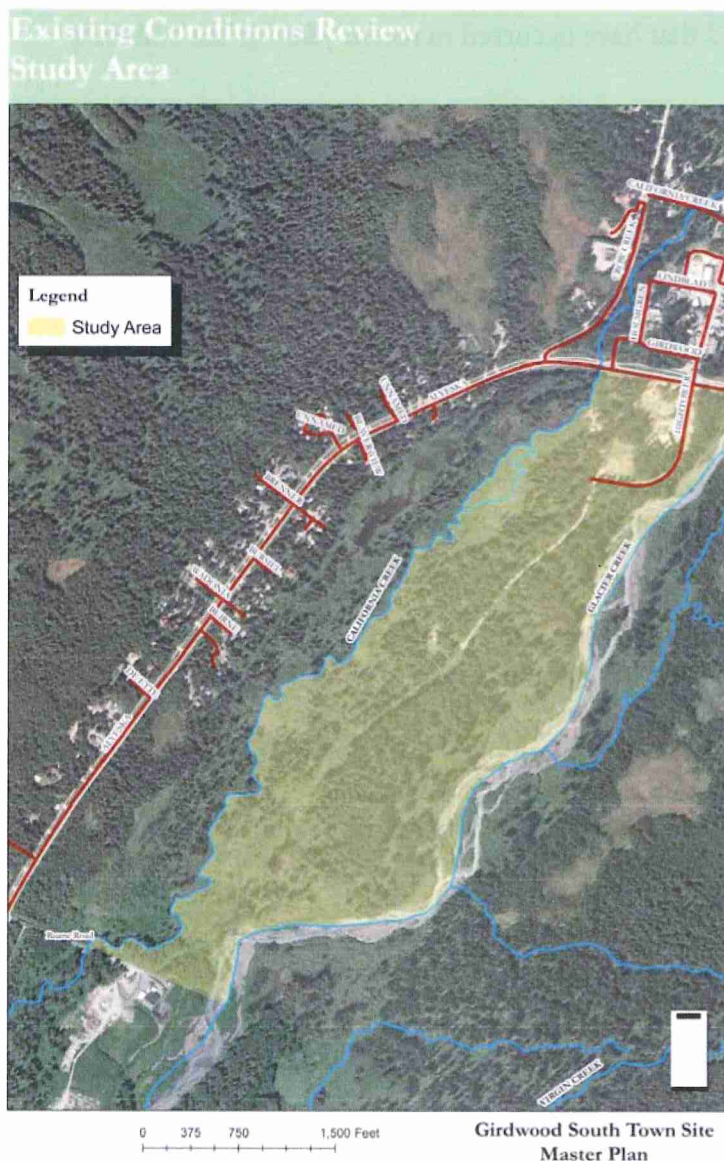


# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of the Girdwood South Townsite Area Plan is to update and expand upon the Girdwood Commercial Areas and Transportation Plan (CAT Plan). Adopted by the Anchorage Assembly in February 2001, the CAT Plan recommended specific development strategies to stimulate Girdwood's economy and improve multi-modal connections among the community's disparate nodes of residential, recreational, and resort/commercial activity. This South Townsite Area Plan is intended to focus more specifically on that portion of the New Girdwood Townsite that is south of Alyeska Highway.

**Map 1.1 Girdwood South Townsite Study Area**



Among the community development strategies recommended in the 2001 CAT Plan was the extension of Hightower Road from the townsite on the north side of Alyeska Highway across to the south side, which at that time was home to a fire station, tennis courts, Little Bears Playhouse childcare center, a baseball field, and the annual Forest Fair. Although otherwise undeveloped, the area from the highway southward was zoned for civic and commercial/recreational uses by the Girdwood Area Plan, or GAP, adopted in 1995. There was a platted residential subdivision known as the Squirrel Cages in the South Townsite that predated the GAP, although by 2001 only three home sites in the subdivision had been sold and the unconventional layout was no longer considered viable. Since that time, the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), Heritage Land Bank (HLB) has had the property replatted, eliminating the "Squirrel Cage" property configuration.

In proposing to extend Hightower Road to the south, the CAT Plan envisioned a different pattern of development: a reinvigorated mixed-use “Main Street” that would access new, complementary commercial and mixed uses on the south side of the highway and provide a more effective connection between the two halves of the New Girdwood Townsite. It was hoped that new development enabled by the Hightower extension would attract more local residents and visitors to this central area, thereby helping to stimulate new commercial development in the languishing North Townsite and gradually helping to transform the entire New Girdwood Townsite area into Girdwood’s primary civic and commercial core.

Since 2001, new developments and infrastructure improvements in the townsite vicinity suggest that it is timely to revisit and update the CAT plan provisions relating to the South Townsite and, in particular, the Main Street concept for Hightower Road. A more likely scenario is that the South Townsite area will become a hub of civic and park uses. Changes and developments in Girdwood that have occurred in recent years or are currently under consideration include:

- A new library/community meeting room has been constructed and a new fire station will be constructed in the near future; an improved road to the library is needed.
- A consortium of groups including Little Bears and the health clinic has developed plans for a new multi-use facility and is actively seeking a new site and funding.
- KEUL community radio has renovated its Community Club building on the site and the plan calls for identification of a better location within the study area.
- There is concern that the Forest Fair event has outgrown its home base in California Creek Park and that the plan for management and staging of the festival should be updated.
- Alyeska Resort changed ownership in November 2006, and the new owner comes with renewed energy for improvements at the resort.
- A Federal Grant has funded the construction of additional parking immediately adjacent to Alyeska Highway in the North Townsite. Additionally, improvements to Crow Creek Road are being considered. These improvements will support future residential development in the Crow Creek neighborhood.
- Roadway improvements on the Seward Highway have greatly eased access to Girdwood from Anchorage.

In response to these changes and as required by Title 21, Chapter 9, the Municipality of Anchorage’s Heritage Land Bank (HLB) has initiated this process to undertake the development of an Area Plan for the Girdwood South Townsite.

## **The Study Area**

With a population of 2,250 in 2010, the small community of Girdwood is located about forty miles southeast of Anchorage on Turnagain Arm. Girdwood is home to Alyeska Resort, Alaska's largest developed ski area, and is strategically located in the major tourist corridor between Anchorage and the cruise ship ports of Seward and Whittier. The Girdwood South Townsite study area, located south of the Alyeska Highway between California Creek and Glacier Creek, measures approximately 200 acres in extent. The study area boundaries are Alyeska Highway on the north, Ruane Road to the south, California Creek on the west, and Glacier Creek on the east. The study area is about a third of a mile wide at its widest extent between the creeks and slightly more than a mile long from north to south. Approximately half of the site is zoned open space (90 acres), with the remainder zoned Commercial/Recreation (65 acres), Commercial/Institutional and Parks (37 acres), and Parks and Public Institutions (5 acres). For a detailed description of the zoning and land uses in the study area, please refer to Chapter 4.

## **Land Ownership and the Heritage Land Bank**

With the exception of three small platted home site inholdings, the study area is owned entirely by the MOA. The HLB, a division within Municipality, has management authority over the majority of the area. (The land under the fire station, the new library, and park facilities is managed by other MOA departments.) Unless the three privately-owned lots are repurchased by HLB, any future development plan for the South Townsite area will be required to maintain legal access to them (See Map 4.1 Zoning and Land Ownership). The mission of the HLB is "to manage uncommitted municipal land and the Heritage Land Bank Fund in a manner designed to benefit the present and future citizens of Anchorage, promote orderly development, and achieve the goals of the Comprehensive Plan." HLB achieves this mission by inventorying and managing HLB lands and resources to benefit a variety of municipal purposes. The inventory includes residential, commercial, industrial, open space and recreational areas. HLB's mission is not necessarily revenue-driven; if a project is found to be in the best interest of the Municipality by the Mayor and the Assembly, a below-market lease or sale may be provided to a nonprofit or governmental lessee or purchaser. HLB's long-term intent is to help foster a strong community. As an example of its responsiveness to community needs, HLB is working with Little Bears on a below-market lease that will assist the childcare center in locating a new facility somewhere in the South Townsite.

## **Physical Constraints**

The South Townsite area is mostly flat bottomland that is partly forested with thick stands of cottonwood. As in all of Girdwood, thin soils, a high water table, and drainage issues will present development challenges. More importantly, the site exhibits a variety of significant environmental constraints related to the creeks on the site's east and west sides.

Delineated wetlands, floodways, and floodplains cover over half the site. With seasonally high flows, constantly shifting channel beds, and eroding banks, Glacier and California Creeks subject a large portion of the study area to periodic flood hazards. The only land uses allowed by the Anchorage Municipal Code (Title 21) in flood hazard districts are parks and playgrounds, although built structures may be allowed in these areas if they meet requirements to minimize damage from flooding. Of the estimated total site area of 186 acres, only about 100 acres—a little more than 50% of the site—is deemed suitable for development. This includes 83 acres within the 100-year floodplains of both creeks. For a more detailed description of physical conditions in the study area, see Chapter 3 (See Maps 3.3 Environmental Constraints and 3.4 Potential Development Area).

## **Planning and Regulatory Context**

Title 21, Chapter 9 of the Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC), which applies specifically to Girdwood, describes allowed land uses and development standards in the zones designated in the South Townsite study area. This document fulfills the requirements of Chapter 21.09.030E. (Area Master Planning) of the AMC. AMC 21.09 includes Girdwood specific land use regulations and guidelines intended to implement Girdwood Area Plan (GAP) elements and to preserve and enhance the distinctive mountain-resort character and the local natural environment. Discrete sections of the Chapter 21.09 regulations exist to meet these goals, including Section 21.09.030, which outlines administrative and review procedures and requirements. Paragraph E. of that section covers the Area Master Planning process, which is intended to facilitate the planned development of large tracts of land under unified ownership prior to subdivision or development. The Area Master Plan establishes the general arrangement of land uses, circulation and infrastructure. It is meant to be the basis upon which subsequent subdivision, public infrastructure improvements, and private development projects are made.

While the GAP and the Commercial Areas and Transportation Master Plan (CAT) delineate basic land uses for the South Townsite, this Area Master Plan serves as a bridge between these general land use areas and future site-specific development plans and details. An Area Master Plan is intended to provide the next level of planning and development guidance of this area. Within the context of AMC 21.09, this Area Master Plan provides guidance over future development plans, that is, subdivision and development plans must be based on and follow the land uses, public improvements, and design elements outlined in the document. More detailed regulatory requirements and review procedures for this study area ultimately rest with applicable specific standards of Chapter 21.09, as presented in the zoning district section (21.09.040), the use regulations (21.09.050), dimensional standards (21.09.060), site development and design standards (21.09.070), and building standards (21.09.080).

Certain zoning districts in Girdwood require additional specificity for planning actions. This detail is outlined with purpose and intent statements and standards in the Develop-



ment Master Plan section (AMC 21.09.030F). The intent of a Development Master Plan is to ensure that future development in such areas will meet or exceed the Chapter Nine standards. Planned developments in these zoning districts must establish specific and detailed items in each master plan with review and approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission. This code section applies to the southern portion of the South Townsite planning area, which is zoned GCR-1 and included as Phase 3 in the master plan. As per action by the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&ZC), a Development Master Plan will also be required for development in Phase 2.

Among the provisions in Title 21.09 that will affect development in the South Townsite are standards for streets and parking, pedestrian circulation, and building height and design. Provisions relating to parking for non-residential uses allow some flexibility in locating off-site parking for commercial development, and there may be some flexibility as well in the calculation of required parking quantities, depending upon the mix of uses and proximity to alternate modes of transportation. (See Chapter 4 for more detail on relevant zoning standards and design guidelines.)

Municipal standards and fire codes typically require new developments to have multiple access points to provide emergency access and connectivity. Of particular significance to future development in the South Townsite is a provision in Title 21.09 that limits the length of cul-de-sac streets to a maximum of 450 feet (21.09.070F.6.b.i.). By code, proposed streets longer than 450 feet must be connected to a second access road. The options for a second access into the South Townsite are limited: the existing platted right-of-way that extends from Glacier Creek Drive west to Alyeska Highway would have to cross large wetlands on both sides of California Creek; a mile-long road extending lengthwise through the site to Ruane Road could be equally cost-prohibitive. The amount of developable land above the 100-year floodplain probably cannot warrant the expense of road connections, bridges, and wetland mitigation required to connect the South Townsite with Alyeska Highway to the west. Obtaining a variance from the standard is unlikely.

The layout of streets in the study area must also adhere to applicable fire codes. The fire code requirement for a second access point is triggered by the quantity and size of development. Two access roads that can accommodate fire trucks are needed if development exceeds specified thresholds (buildings over thirty feet in height, developments larger than 62,000 square feet, more than thirty single-family or duplex units, or more than 100 multi-family residential units). These thresholds may be higher in developments that are equipped with sprinklers, and generally, the Fire Marshall has some discretion in approving new development. Because the area is outside the MOA building permit zone, the State Fire Marshall reviews land use plans in Girdwood. The Fire Marshall can allow development today if there is a reasonably firm commitment to a secondary access road in the future.

## **Project Process**

In mid-2007, the HLB selected a team of consultants led by Agnew::Beck Consulting, a community planning and development firm in Anchorage, to lead the planning process for the Girdwood South Townsite Area Plan. Team members include The Boutet Company, responsible for assessing environmental, infrastructure, and engineering issues and constraints; Sherry Dorward Landscape Architecture, a Colorado-based specialist in resort community planning who led the CAT Plan process; and the Anchorage office of HDR Alaska Inc., an engineering firm currently involved in planning roadway improvements in Girdwood.

Through an intensive public process, the planning team has worked closely with a subcommittee of Girdwood residents, as well as with interested Girdwood individuals, representatives of the HLB, and various departments of the MOA in order to achieve the support and consensus that will move the plan forward to adoption and implementation.

## **Townsite Subcommittee**

At the planning team's request, a Townsite Subcommittee was created in September 2007 to provide broad representation from many different community perspectives, including residents near the study area, business owners, developers, and related interests. Members included:

Bill Chadwick, Girdwood Fire Chief  
Larry Daniels, Alyeska Resort  
Sam Daniels  
Kerry Dorius, Girdwood Clinic  
John Gallup, Girdwood Board of Supervisors  
Sue Kennedy  
Jonnie Lazarus, Girdwood Parks and Recreation  
Lewis Leonard, Girdwood Community Club/KEUL radio  
Phil Livingston  
Diana Stone Livingston, Subcommittee Chair  
Steve Mendonsa  
Cece Mendonsa  
Tommy O'Malley, Girdwood Forest Fair Committee  
Kathy Recken  
Jerry Reichlin, Land Use Committee Chair  
Alison Rein, US Forest Service  
Jake Thompson, Girdwood Board of Supervisors  
Tom Yeager, Girdwood Area Plan Rewrite Subcommittee  
Karen Zaccaro, Little Bears Playhouse childcare center

The Townsite Subcommittee, in coordination with the Girdwood Board of Supervisors (GBOS) and Girdwood Land Use Committee (GLUC), has acted as a citizen advisory body throughout the planning process. To date, four subcommittee meetings, open to the public, have been held (October 16, 2007; January 9, February 20, and March 25, 2008).

## **Phase 1 - Research and Information Gathering**

The planning team initiated the Girdwood South Townsite Area Plan process in the fall of 2007 by assembling an overview of past planning documents and projects in progress, compiling information regarding land use and market trends in the Girdwood valley, and preparing environmental maps and data on the project area.

During this initial phase, informal interviews were conducted with specific stakeholders, including representatives from Alyeska Resort, the US Forest Service (specifically in regard to the Iditarod Trail), businesses located in the study area, and other individuals with knowledge about current and proposed projects. The MOA Mayor's Office, Department of Project Management and Engineering (PM&E), and the Planning Department were also consulted. Information from these interviews was used to build knowledge of the area and begin to identify community issues and priorities.

The first of two public work sessions was held on November 1-3, 2007, during which time the planning team worked with the community at large to share information about site conditions, solicit input on key issues and community priorities, and brainstorm ideas for the plan. The sessions began with an open house presentation and group discussion on November 1, 2007 to review environmental issues, existing and desired land uses, and options for road alignments.



On the following day, the planning team held an informal work session with representatives of current and proposed institutional uses in the area, including the Fire Chief, representatives of Little Bears, the Anchorage School District, members of the Forest Fair Committee, the Municipality of Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department, representatives from the Girdwood Community Club, and from the proposed new charter school. The workshop wrapped up on November 3 with a guided field trip in the study area and the presentation and refinement of two draft conceptual plan sketches that reflected the input of the Girdwood community over the three-day workshop. (See Chapter 7, Evolution of the Plan, for these conceptual sketch alternatives.)

This first workshop saw broad agreement among community members on the concept of linking the North and South Townsite areas, consistent with recommendations in the CAT Plan. Participants also generally agreed that development in the South Townsite area should focus on a mix of institutional, civic, and commercial uses clustered toward the northern portion of the site, transitioning to residential, recreational, and open space uses in the southern half, where physical conditions pose greater constraints. Items of immediate priority were the designation of a new location for Little Bears Playhouse childcare center and a decision on the routing of an improved road to the library. (See appendices for minutes from this and other public meetings.) The November sessions also identified a number of issues to be addressed in order to move forward with any scenario for change, primary among them:

- Uncertainty about the requirement for a second access road and the feasibility of a proposed alternate route from the Girdwood Place intersection with Alyeska Highway that would encroach into the 200-foot California Creek easement.
- Reluctance to support the displacement of existing uses unless a site for their relocation is designated and questions about how their relocation would be funded are addressed before the existing facilities are removed. Of specific concern were the tennis courts, Glacier City Hall, the ball field, Forest Fair pavilions, the skateboard park, the community-built playground, and Girdwood Community Club House. Many participants felt that the skateboard park and the playground should be left in their current locations under any development scenario.
- Uncertainty as to whether the land along the Alyeska Highway, currently zoned as Parks and Public Institutions, can be developed for other uses.
- Inability to project with any certainty the amount of new commercial space likely to be needed in Girdwood in the near- and long-term.

## Phase 2 - Conceptual Alternatives and Selection of Preferred Alternative



In the second phase, the planning team developed a set of conceptual plan alternatives based on environmental data, community input, and general direction outlined in previously adopted Municipal Planning documents. During the first three months of 2008, these alternatives were reviewed with the Townsite Subcommittee and the general public in an effort to identify their preferred strategies and approaches.



This phase was an iterative process, during which alternatives were reviewed and revised several times until some consensus could be reached on the general outlines of a preferred alternative. A second public workshop was held on May 7, 2008 to review the draft plan. Participants at that meeting were in general agreement with the major components of the plan as presented:

- The “Main Street” concept for small-scale mixed-use civic and commercial development on both sides of Egloff Drive, including a “landmark” commercial building at the corner of Egloff Drive and Alyeska Highway (Note that the location of this landmark building was later determined to be on dedicated park property and this concept has been discarded.)
- The re-routing of Egloff Drive to the west side of the new library
- The relocation of Little Bears to a site on the west side of the Egloff Drive extension to the new library
- The inclusion of moderately priced market-rate housing, probably in a later phase of development
- The permanent retention of certain existing community facilities (e.g., skate park, kids playground, park pavilions) in their current location and the temporary retention of other park and recreation facilities (e.g., ball field, tennis courts) in their current location until new sites for them can be developed
- The preservation of a corridor for the Iditarod Trail in the Glacier Creek setback; Strategies to minimize the impact of a possible new second access road into the South Townsite
- Strategies to minimize the impact of a possible new second access road into the South Townsite

### **Phase 3 - Formal Review**

Following the second public workshop, revisions were incorporated and a final draft of the area master plan was prepared for review by the Townsite Subcommittee, HLB officials, other MOA departments, and the general public. The revised draft was posted to the project website, along with regular updates about the plan. The final document then went through a formal approval process that included sequential review by:

- The Girdwood Land Use Committee
- The Girdwood Board of Supervisors
- The Heritage Land Bank Advisory Commission

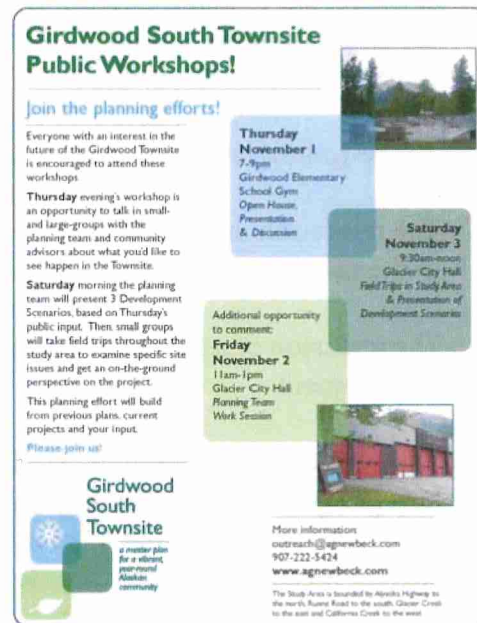


- The Municipality of Anchorage Planning and Zoning Commission

The P&Z Commission approved the plan in 2009 with numerous conditions. Although the plan is officially adopted, this 2014 update is intended to incorporate those conditions and to amend the plan in accordance with community wishes.

## Public Outreach Efforts

Public workshops for the Girdwood South Townsite Area Plan were advertised in the Turnagain Times and the community calendars of the Anchorage Press and the Anchorage Daily News, on posters and flyers that Subcommittee members helped post throughout Girdwood, and announced on local radio station KEUL 88.9. A project webpage has been maintained throughout the planning process at [www.agnewbeck.com](http://www.agnewbeck.com) to provide project updates, meeting notes, draft materials, and a schedule of project-related events. Postcards announcing the second community workshop were sent to a list of approximately 2,000 Girdwood residents and landowners. Townsite Subcommittee members also emailed, called and personally talked with other residents about the plan. Announcements were made at GBOS meetings, which are also broadcast on the radio.



## Fundamental Project Goals

Early in the planning process, the planning team, Townsite Subcommittee, and community participants outlined a set of general project goals to provide broad direction for the plan and a basis for evaluating alternative future uses. There is a strong community consensus that the desired outcomes of the Master Plan should be to:

- **Maintain the heart of Girdwood** in the New Girdwood Townsite—both north and south sides—as the active, vital and connected center of Girdwood community life.
- **Integrate the north and south sides of the townsite** by extending Hightower Road across the Alyeska Highway and using the corridor currently identified as Egloff Drive for a “main street” on both sides of Alyeska Highway. Working with the community and the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (ADOT&PF), identify acceptable means of traffic calming and improved pedestrian connection.

- **Create a compact mixed-use village center** where residents and visitors can work, live and play, find goods and services, and meet friends and neighbors.
- **Retain important community uses in the South Townsite:** if existing civic uses shift locations, provide for new locations and facilities equal to or better than what exists today.
- **Retain Girdwood's small-town character and encourage development with a "light touch":** Preserve ample open space, good views, inviting walking areas and buildings scaled to achieve a pleasant pedestrian environment and to preserve views; natural features and people should predominate over pavement and parking.
- **Provide for both near-term and long-term change:** Resolve near-term needs (a library access road and a new site for Little Bears), clarify the circulation network as a supportive framework for future development, and identify a general arrangement of civic, commercial, and residential uses that can be reasonably phased in the future as demand for these becomes clearer and funding becomes available.

Figure 1.1

## Recommended Land Use Plan for Girdwood South Townsite





## Summary of Plan Recommendations

### 1. Establish a New Collector Road Into the South Townsite

The Library requires a paved road from Alyeska Highway for access. The area master plan recommends that the road currently called Egloff Drive be extended for library access and routed around the east side of the Fire Station and Library/Community Center before turning west through the center of the South Townsite area. Per plan recommendations, this road will be renamed Hightower Road as an extension of Hightower Road from the North Townsite. The future Hightower Road will serve as a main street for the South Townsite Area and may ultimately link all the way to Ruane Road to the south.



### 2. Protect Girdwood Park and the Amenities it Provides the Community

The amenities in Girdwood Park, including the skateboard park and kids' playground, are treasured within the community. Girdwood Park is a dedicated park and not subject to non-park development.

### 3. Protect & Improve the Iditarod Trail

The Iditarod Trail is an important recreational and historic resource that passes through the South Townsite area. The HLB has an agreement with the US Forest Service, which manages the trail, to reserve a route for the Iditarod Trail. This master plan indicates the trail generally where it is today, within the 200-foot Glacier Creek setback on the west side of the creek approximately 100 feet from the banks; a more specific alignment will need to be field located. The goal is to locate the trail so that it will not be at risk of damage from shifting creek channels, but close enough to provide users with views of and contact with the water. It is also intended that the trail provide attractive pedestrian access to destinations throughout the study area.

#### 4. Identify a New Location for Little Bears

Little Bears Playhouse childcare center is an institution in Girdwood. However, the existing Little Bears building is undersized and in poor condition. The group that operates the facility has been working with the Municipality to reserve land and raise money to fund a new building. The group has joined with other groups seeking space and a combined facility that would contain Little Bears Child Care, a clinic, and a community athletic/recreation facility is now referred to as the Girdwood Multi-Use Community Center. Confirmation of a specific site for the new building is a prerequisite to proceeding with the project and acquiring needed funds. The master plan recommends relocating Little Bears to a site south of California Creek Park with access from the new Hightower Road. Little Bears' staff members support this location because it has a good functional relationship to the existing

kids' recreational facilities and can be as easily accessed by car upon completion of Hightower Road. Access to the Little Bears Playhouse childcare center would be provided from a small access road off the extension of Hightower Road.



#### 5. Improve the Venue for Forest Fair

The annual Forest Fair has long been a treasured highlight of life in Girdwood. In recent years, however, Forest Fair attendance and associated problems (illegal camping, inadequate parking, disruption of local life) have steadily grown. The Forest Fair Committee, many people in the community, the Parks and Recreation Department, and the HLB have all been questioning if and how the Forest Fair should continue. The objective of this plan is to support the community as it works to find ways to improve the Forest Fair and make it a better fit with community needs. The plan recommends that, in the near term, the event venue and both pavilions remain where they are today. However, it envisions a phased relocation of event activities to the southern portion of the study area, where there is more space to accommodate the event and better potential to develop greatly improved parking, support facilities, and systems to control access into the event.



## 6. Provide for a Flexible Mix of Future Civic and Commercial Uses



Both the GAP and the CAT Plan identify the entire New Girdwood Townsite as the preferred location in Girdwood for local-serving commercial development.

This central node offers several benefits:

- The combination of new commercial and civic uses helps anchor the townsite and increases the potential that this area will become the true heart of Girdwood.
  - Commercial development in the South Townsite is preferred to development dispersed in other parts of the community, such as along the Seward Highway, because this central location can be reached relatively easily without a car and can become a convenient hub for local transit service.
- Commercial uses in this location would complement the visitor-serving retail that will concentrate at the resort.

The South Townsite area plan recommends that the northernmost portion of the study area be used for a well-planned mix of commercial and civic activities, as shown in the illustrative site plan. The configuration of narrow platted lots in the North Townsite makes this type of development unfeasible there. Because the timing of development will be driven by market demand, the near-term intent of this master plan is simply to ensure that space is reserved in the South Townsite to accommodate the eventual expansion of commercial activity in a coordinated way as demand warrants.

It is further recommended that commercial development focus on local-serving uses not currently available in Girdwood. A particular goal is to provide space for a grocery store of about 15,000 square feet (approximately the size of New Sagaya's City Market in Anchorage) and associated retail services, such as a bank, small hardware store or dry cleaners. Developments that have retail or civic uses on the ground floor and civic, housing, or office uses on upper floors are encouraged.

## **7. Provide Access to Current and Proposed Facilities**

In part to make recommended development affordable, the master plan recommends a phased approach to the building of roads in the South Townsite. The extension of Hightower Road (currently Egloff Drive) will accomplish the immediate objectives of providing improved access to the fire station, the new library, the relocated Little Bears, and any second-phase commercial and civic developments. In the initial phase of development, this can be done without triggering the need for a second point of access that will eventually be required by fire codes and the limitation on the length of cul-de-sac streets. Fire standards are a key to future development in the South Townsite area. The small amount of truly developable land in the south townsite area makes it difficult to warrant the expense of bridge connections to Alyeska Highway to the west or a long connection through wetlands to Ruane Drive to the south. In subsequent phases, as Girdwood's population increases, the extension of roads and infrastructure can proceed in step with evolving market demand.

## **8. Provide Adequate Parking to Support New Development**

A primary project objective is to provide the right amount of parking: enough to support the requirements at each stage of development for civic, commercial and other activities, but not more than is reasonably needed. Finding this balance point will allow for businesses to be successful while maintaining green space and ensuring the area is a good place to get around without a car.

Development in the South Townsite will be required to adhere to the parking standards set forth in AMC, Title 21.9. The existing parking code requires four spaces per 1000 square feet of commercial space, which includes most civic uses, and slightly less than that for certain office uses. As part of the implementation process associated with this plan, the Municipality will recommend changes in Chapter 9 of AMC Title 21 that would allow for reductions in parking requirements when certain standards are met. With a long-term master plan that encourages on-street parking, shared parking among complementary uses, alternative modes of circulation (including public transit), and residential neighborhoods within walking distance, the off-street parking requirement could be reduced by an estimated 10-30 percent. However, parking plans must also take into account the probability that a certain number of spaces will be lost to snow storage in winter.

Unlike the North Townsite, which in many locations prohibits parking on site, zoning for the South Townsite requires onsite parking to accommodate new development needs. With most parking accommodated on-site, there is no need in the South Townsite to provide publicly funded and maintained parking lots. Instead, on-street parking will be provided on the new Egloff Drive Collector Roadway for that portion of the road in the gC-5 zone, as required by AMC 21.09.070.F.4.c.



In addition to general parking associated with commercial, civic and residential uses within the South Townsite, the Girdwood Fire Department will need 40 dedicated parking spaces for volunteer firefighters. These spaces are to be located near the fire station but not along the access route used by the fire trucks.

To achieve an appealing pedestrian environment and preserve the natural feel of the Girdwood valley, extra effort must be made in the South Townsite to limit the visual intrusion of cars and parking. In each development phase, techniques to locate parking lots behind buildings that front the street, to screen parking lots with landscaping, and to distribute parking areas in smaller lots throughout the core area are strongly encouraged. On-street parking in the rights-of-way along new interior streets, in the style of small town main streets, is endorsed as an effective means to augment the parking supply without relying entirely on parking lots.

Overall, the Area Plan recommends that each development phase be carefully evaluated to balance its proposed layout and density with the visual impact of its required parking on the desired small-town character of the core area. As the South Townsite is built out, it will be critically important that the layout of parking proposed for each successive phase of development is seamlessly connected to the network of circulation and parking constructed in the previous phases.

## **9. Provide a Range of Moderately Priced Housing**

Girdwood is an attractive small town and a resort community surrounded by public land. As in many other resort communities, privately owned developable land is a scarce commodity. Girdwood, like the others, has experienced rapid and dramatic increases in housing prices and a consequent shortage of housing options available to local residents. The South Townsite area, with its level, buildable terrain and good access, offers a particularly good location for moderately priced housing. Although housing in this location would currently be isolated, in the future it could offer the benefit of proximity to stores, restaurants and services, and residents' spending will help to support those businesses.

The Area Plan recommends a modest number of residential units (30-80 units) at moderate densities (6-14 units per acre). This implies a focus on duplexes and triplexes, cottage-style, single-family detached homes on land held in common and small multifamily structures (4-8 unit buildings). This housing would be situated south of the Phase 2 development shown on Figure 1.1.

The overall objective of the Area Plan is to offer small market-rate residences that are within the reach of people of modest incomes, particularly local employees. Depending on the timing of new civic and commercial development and the build-out of roads and infrastructure, this housing would likely be offered (in a future phase of the project) at a

location south of the existing baseball field. Finally, the issue of the appropriate amount of housing in the area will be revisited for the southern portions of the project area. A second point of access for fire safety will likely govern when or if additional housing can be constructed in the southern portion of the South Townsite. It is probable that the Municipality would place the burden of constructing this access on a future developer. The cost of providing a connection to either Ruane Road or Juniper Drive may have a signifi-

## **10. Create Development Standards Specific to the South Townsite**

Over the course of the project there has been general agreement that future development in the Girdwood core needs to maintain the community's low-key small-town character, including access to open space, trees, views and community landmarks. The ultimate success of development will be strongly affected by the character of what is built: parking, streetscape, and landscaping as well as buildings.

Title 21, Chapter 9 sets out a general framework for maintaining Girdwood's small-town mountain character, but the strict application of Municipal standards for road widths, road surfaces, parking, and setbacks could work against this goal. Standards that apply specifically to the South Townsite area may be necessary to encourage these desired development patterns:

- A pedestrian-oriented environment where a mixture of uses can be concentrated without overwhelming the natural character of the site
- Buildings that respond to Girdwood's natural setting and climate and that are modest in scale, comparable to existing commercial structures in the North Townsite (An exception could be made to accommodate a grocery store and its associated uses)
- Civic and commercial buildings that help define an attractive main street setting where locals and visitors have a variety of places to congregate year-round
- Roads and streetscape scaled to the character of a small community, not an urban downtown
- Connective multi-modal infrastructure (trails, bike paths, weather-sheltered sidewalks, shuttle bus stops, etc) that helps to unify the entire townsite area by means other than autos

## 11. Calm Traffic on Alyeska Highway

Hightower Road is envisioned as the new north-south spine in a fully developed town center on both sides of Alyeska Highway. It is clear that taming traffic on the Alyeska Highway is important to achieve greater connectivity between the North and South Townsites. As development in the South Townsite occurs, highway improvements will be needed so that crossing the road is made safer for local cars, bicyclists, and pedestrians, while at the same time the highway can continue to serve as a primary access route to the resort and other up-valley developments. Alyeska Highway improvements are not within the scope of this project, but the master planning team considers it essential that a collaborative planning process be initiated as soon as possible. The master plan recommends that representatives from the Municipality, HLB, the GBOS, GLUC, and ADOT&PF meet to review the emerging plan for the South Townsite and to begin scoping issues and basic goals. Options for specific action steps could include:

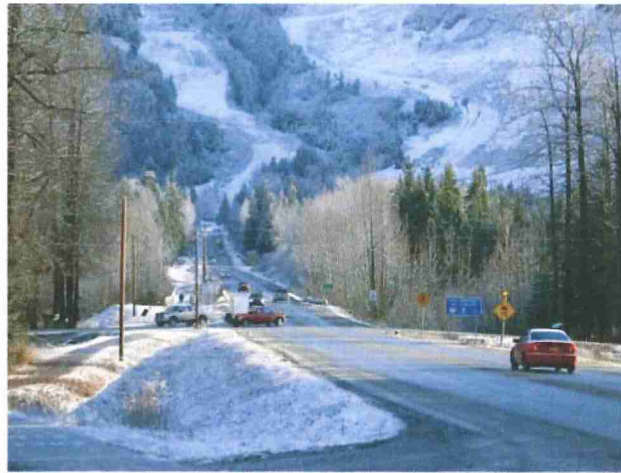
- Emphasize and improve the pedestrian connection from the North Townsite to the South Townsite that lies adjacent to Glacier Creek and passes under the Alyeska Highway Bridge (other tunnel connections under the Alyeska Highway between California Creek and Glacier Creek have proven infeasible after additional study)
- Install traffic calming features that convey to drivers the clear need to slow down (the use of roundabouts at the intersections of Alyeska Highway and Crow Creek Road, Holmgren Avenue, and Hightower Road have been suggested and other options for calming may exist—these strategies are preferable to approaches that leave the road essentially as it is today, relying only on the addition of flashing lights, signage, painted crosswalks and reduced speed limits)
- Add signage, public art, special light fixtures or other features that let people know they have arrived in the heart of Girdwood and to create a stronger sense of entry and community identity

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## 2. MARKET OVERVIEW

This section of the Area Plan briefly reviews economic factors and current trends in Girdwood's real estate market. Girdwood has long been—and continues to be—a popular place to live and visit. The growth of recreation and tourism in South-central Alaska and the ease of access to Girdwood from the Seward Highway makes the community an attractive destination. Continuing population growth in Anchorage compounds the pressure on Girdwood, bringing both commuters and more visitors. The Municipality and Heritage Land Bank (HLB) understand that planning efforts in Girdwood must take these larger trends into account, as they have significant influence on the community's economy, real estate market, and development patterns.



### Population Growth

The population of the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), which includes Girdwood, has been expanding, and its growth is projected to continue at a modest rate through the next decade. In the twenty years between 1980 and 2000, Girdwood's population doubled, and continued growth is expected (Table 2.1 Municipality of Anchorage Population Projections).

**Table 2.1, Municipality of Anchorage Population Projections**

Year	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Municipality of Anchorage	174,431	226,338	260,283	283,760	295,887
Girdwood	976	1,360	1,817	2,958	3,846

Source: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2008 and Anchorage 2020. \*The estimates for Girdwood's population are derived from growth projections in the Girdwood Area Plan for 2013 (3,300) and from the increasing proportion of the Municipality of Anchorage population that Girdwood represents: from less than 1% in 1980 (0.55%) to just over 1% in 2010. Using this trend, it is estimated that the Girdwood population will represent 1.3% of the Anchorage population in 2020.

As of the 2014 update to this plan, the 2010 actual census data for Girdwood is available and it shows a population of 2,250, 30% less than projections from 2008. As a result of this, the 2020 projection is also likely to be overly optimistic.

## Residential Real Estate Trends

Between 1990 and 2000, Girdwood's population rose by approximately 500 individuals. There was an accompanying growth in the number of housing units, from 1,227 units in 1990 to 1,344 units in 2000 (Table 2.2 Girdwood Housing Supply). Due to increasing seasonal use of residential units, Girdwood has experienced a noticeable drop in the number of homes listed as vacant and a corresponding increase in the demand for housing. New residential projects proposed in the Girdwood vicinity, particularly the 710 units proposed in the Crow Creek area, may relieve some of this pressure, although their target market will be predominantly second-home buyers, not year-round residents. Overall, the increase in the number of housing units may not be keeping pace with the growth of the year-round population.

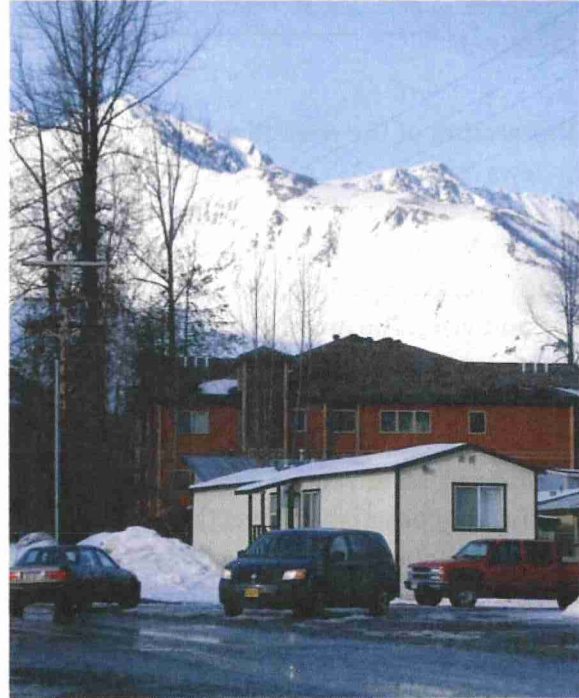


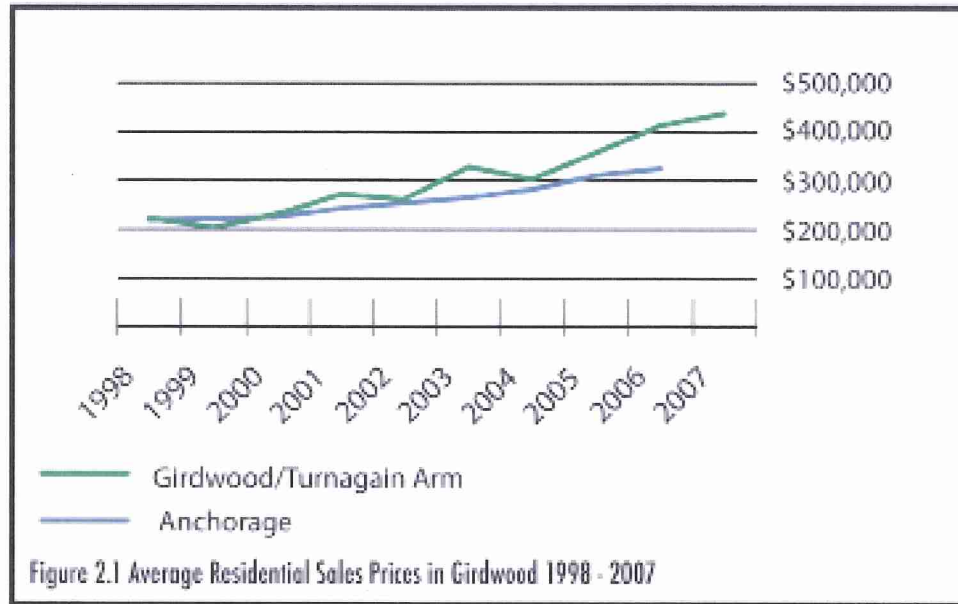
Table 2.2 Girdwood Housing Supply

	1990	2000
Total Housing Units	1,227	1,344
Occupied Housing	540	821
Vacant Due to Seasonal Use	590	436

Source: GAP (1995) and the State of Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED) (2008)

Land available for development in the Girdwood area has always been limited. The 1995 Girdwood Area Plan (GAP) determined that only 288 acres out of a total 11,860 undeveloped acres (which included Municipal, State and private land) were privately owned. Although a full land use inventory has not been conducted since the 1995 GAP, the fundamental issue remains unchanged: Girdwood is outgrowing its supply of private land available for development, with predictable upward pressure on market prices. The average sale price of residential properties has almost doubled in the past ten years (Figure 2.1 Average Residential Sales Prices in Girdwood 1998-2007). During the same period, the number of undeveloped parcels of land for sale, admittedly a very small sample to begin with, decreased by half, while the sales price more than tripled and the number of days on the market dropped from over a year to just a few months or less (Table 2.4, Recent Residential Sales in Girdwood)





Based on Multiple listings Service data. Source: Dynamic Properties Girdwood and MLS. Prices in dollars in 2007.

Not surprisingly, the Girdwood real estate market, though small compared to the overall Anchorage market, is robust. Over the past ten years, data on the annual sales of single-family homes, condominiums, and vacant land indicate that while annual sales volumes have been relatively steady in all categories, prices have soared (Table 2.4 Recent Residential Sales in Girdwood). The average price for a single-family home has doubled, condominium prices have increased an average of 88 percent, and vacant land prices are up more than 330 percent. In all cases, average selling prices were virtually the same as the list prices, suggesting a sellers' market. Average days on the market for single-family homes fluctuated quite a bit, but for condominiums and vacant land it dropped by more than half.



Table 2.3 Historical Data on Girdwood Residential Real Estate Sales

Year	Number sold	Average List Price	Average Sold Price	Average Days on Market
<b>Single-Family Residential</b>				
2007	34	\$452,952	\$436,475	109
2006	22	\$421,832	\$411,392	38
2005	15	\$358,808	\$350,940	30
2004	28	\$306,884	\$301,189	50
2003	31	\$335,544	\$326,951	82
2002	24	\$270,988	\$260,207	118
2001	25	\$280,058	\$270,977	83
2000	34	\$235,145	\$228,046	96
1999	37	\$212,637	\$205,072	88
1998	39	\$228,574	\$221,522	187
<b>Condominiums</b>				
2007	38	\$245,405	\$239,294	92
2006	30	\$235,796	\$231,963	71
2005	20	\$158,100	\$156,365	24
2004	32	\$164,395	\$162,504	48
2003	33	\$125,847	\$124,130	43
2002	41	\$125,996	\$121,876	67
2001	43	\$113,123	\$111,339	154
2000	34	\$126,299	\$121,304	125
1999	25	\$110,167	\$107,441	104
1998	29	\$130,126	\$123,974	205
<b>Vacant Land</b>				
2007	8	\$177,725	\$171,112	106
2006	10	\$182,882	\$176,137	78
2005	11	\$162,593	\$155,900	23
2004	12	\$150,163	\$139,474	56
2003	17	\$79,622	\$74,276	185
2002	16	\$147,026	\$95,632	239
2001	16	\$96,209	\$91,451	429
2000	11	\$53,216	\$51,464	872
1999	12	\$175,569	\$80,708	139
1998	15	\$63,180	\$58,673	480

All prices are in 2007 dollars using the CPI index created for Anchorage by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

Sales include both existing and new construction.

Source: Dynamic Properties Girdwood

More current information tells a similar story. Table 2.4 lists sales volume and average prices for January through February 2006, 2007 and 2008. The average price for homes and condos has increased while sales remain constant. The average price for condominiums, only two years ago much more affordable than single-family homes, has risen at a far faster rate, and unsold inventory at the beginning of 2008 was much higher than in the previous two years.

Table 2.4 Recent Residential Sales in Girdwood

	Jan-Feb 2006	Jan-Feb 2007	Jan-Feb 2008
<b>Homes</b>			
New Listings	5	12	6
Sold	2	2	3
Average Price	\$431,000	\$429,500	\$472,500
<b>Condos</b>			
New Listings	7	6	16
Sold	5	6	3
Average Price	\$202,583	\$247,512	\$411,000
<b>Land</b>			
New Listings	4	4	2
Sold	4	1	1
Average Price	\$167,500	\$165,000	\$182,000

Source: Dynamic Properties Girdwood

## Proposed Residential Developments

### Crow Creek Neighborhood

The 2005 Crow Creek Neighborhood Land Use Plan will guide the development of more than 1,000 acres of land owned by the HLB over the next twenty years. The development plan, which is not yet approved, calls for a mix of single- and multi-family housing, open space, and recreational amenities. The proposal calls for some relatively high-density housing in several development clusters. The Crow Creek neighborhood, when fully built out, could have as many as 710 housing units and residential lots (Table 2.5 Crow Creek Neighborhood Plan). Reflecting the anticipated cost of development, market forces, and the size of the lots, the housing is expected to be mostly mid-range to higher-cost units, with up to 25 percent of the units reserved for sale as lots to individuals. The first phase of the plan is expected to commence in five to seven years.

Table 2.5 Crow Creek Neighborhood Plan

Area	Acres	Single Family and Duplex Units	Attached Units	Total Housing Units/Lots
Total Development Areas	281	350	115 min - 360 max	465-710
Open space	718	--	--	0
Total	1,000	350	115 min - 360 max	465-710

### Glacier-Winner Creek Neighborhood

The Glacier-Winner Creek area has been discussed as another potential location for residential development in Girdwood. The area has recently been the subject of a market analysis that found limited real estate potential. The study, conducted by Peterson Economics (A Market Analysis Evaluating Potential for Real Estate Sales Within a New Destination Resort in Girdwood, Alaska, May 2006) found that while the location, views and access of the Glacier-Winner Creek area were all good, the construction costs would be high.

To evaluate potential demand, the study analyzed data on demographic trends, visitation, real estate sales, and other market information. The two primary markets identified in the study were second-home buyers from Anchorage and the Lower 48 and permanent-home buyers from Anchorage. The study estimates that current demand would support an annual absorption rate of approximately 25-30 units per year and that there would be several barriers to any effort to increase that number, including price sensitivity in the Anchorage market, climate and distance from the Lower 48 market. This development, if it were to happen at all, is thought to be, at best, fifteen to twenty years into the future.

### Moderately Priced Housing

While it is possible that the already-proposed residential developments could alleviate some pressure on housing prices over the next five to twenty years, it is more likely that these units, designed primarily for a resort market, will not greatly alter the housing picture for the majority of prospective local residents. Moreover, increasing infrastructure and construction costs will compound upward pressure on housing prices. In view of the current real estate outlook in Girdwood, there will be a growing need for low- to moderate-income housing for year-round residents.

### **Resort Employee Housing**

Alyeska Resort provides housing for some of its employees and in December 2007 finished a 20,000-square-foot housing project at the resort base called Powder House. The project will house up to 120 people in two-bedroom to four-bedroom apartments. Nonetheless, housing for employees is extremely limited and is available only on a first-come, first-served basis.

### **Creekside Apartments**

Creekside at Alyeska, constructed between the New Girdwood Townsite and Girdwood School, has provided a number of needed affordable housing units for the Girdwood community. The 22 two-bedroom apartments and eight one-bedroom apartments were financed through the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation's (AHFC) Multifamily, Congregate, and Special Needs loan program. The apartments are rented to individuals or families earning 60 percent or less of median income. All ground-floor units have been constructed to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility standards. This is the only below-market-rate subsidized housing serving Girdwood.

## **Commercial Real Estate Trends**

### **Tourism Development**

Tourism in Alaska has shown consistent growth since 2000. In the most recent issue of Alaska Economic Trends (April 2008) released by the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the number of cruise ship passengers climbed from 640,000 in 2000 to over one million in 2007. Because this growth has saturated the capacity of many Southeast Alaska ports, some of the growth in visitation may shift to Southcentral destinations, especially those easily accessible by road, such as Girdwood. Girdwood is already well known as a winter and summer tourist destination, thanks in large part to Alyeska Resort. During the 2003-2004 winter season, the resort employed 565 staff members, and approximately 89,000 visitors rode its lifts. During the 2003-2004 summer season, approximately 69,000 visitors rode the Alyeska tram (2004 Crow Creek Neighborhood Plan, page 53).

Continued growth in the tourism sector will bring increased demand for lodging, vacation real estate, and resort-related commercial services. The growth in tourism, combined with the increasing demand for year-round housing, has put more and more pressure on the community's ability to provide commercial services.

## **Seward Highway Improvements**

Better access, especially for tourists, will be an added stimulus to Girdwood's economic growth. Several completed and planned improvements to the Seward Highway will ease the trip from Anchorage to Girdwood and back. Completed projects include several areas where the highway has been widened from two to four lanes for more efficient traffic flow and where overlook and turn pockets have been added to make stopping easier. These projects reduce travel time and safety concerns. A new bike trail from Bird Creek to Girdwood is an attractive amenity for cyclists and walkers. Long-range improvements include a Bird Creek/Indian Valley bypass, several more widening projects, and additional wildlife viewing areas and pullouts.

## **Community-Serving Commercial**

Girdwood currently has a limited collection of commercial establishments including retail shops and restaurants, lodging, recreational businesses, and real estate offices. Most of these activities are concentrated in one of four locations: the New Girdwood Townsite, the intersection of the Alyeska and Seward Highways, the Alyeska Resort, and the old ski area base.

Specific businesses in Girdwood include restaurants and bars, ski and outdoor gear shops, real estate and vacation rentals, a handful of gift stores, and the Mercantile (a small grocery store). A fuel station, convenience store, and bakery/cafe is located at the intersection of the Seward and Alyeska Highways. Also located in Girdwood are various lodging options, including B&B's, vacation rental homes, and a five-star hotel at Alyeska Resort.

Users of these commercial facilities include visitors to the valley and Girdwood's approximately 2,000 year-round residents. Although residents do patronize local commercial services, they tend to satisfy the majority of their commercial needs in the greater Anchorage Bowl area. Visitors using local commercial services are a very diverse group of summer and winter guests, independent and package travelers, people passing by on the Seward Highway, and second-home owners.

The amount of commercial activity in Girdwood has been generally stable over the last ten years. The total space occupied by retail shops, restaurants and service commercial businesses in the valley (excluding lodging and ski facilities) has not been measured, but is estimated at less than 100,000 square feet.

This report does not attempt to project commercial demand. Rather, several general factors are identified that are likely to increase future demand for commercial space:

- Changes in the number and spending power of valley residents and employees



- Changes in the number, type and spending power of visitors
- Changes in the shopping opportunities available in “competing destinations”—primarily Anchorage—and changes in the cost of driving to those destinations
- Changes in shopping opportunities in Girdwood—including the specific types of goods and services offered, their locations, and the quality and character of these shopping opportunities

The potential for new residential development in Girdwood may spur new development. Over time, new year-round and seasonal homes at the resort and elsewhere in Girdwood will significantly increase residential population in Girdwood. Winter and summer visitation will also continue to grow in the area. The ski area is making major investments in new facilities and better marketing, with the intention of attracting substantially more guests. Other forms of visitation to the valley will likely continue to grow at a rate comparable to the rate of growth in travel to Alaska in general, which is about 3 to 5 percent annually. Finally, changes in fuel prices and concern with emission of greenhouse gases may lead employees and residents to do more shopping in Girdwood.

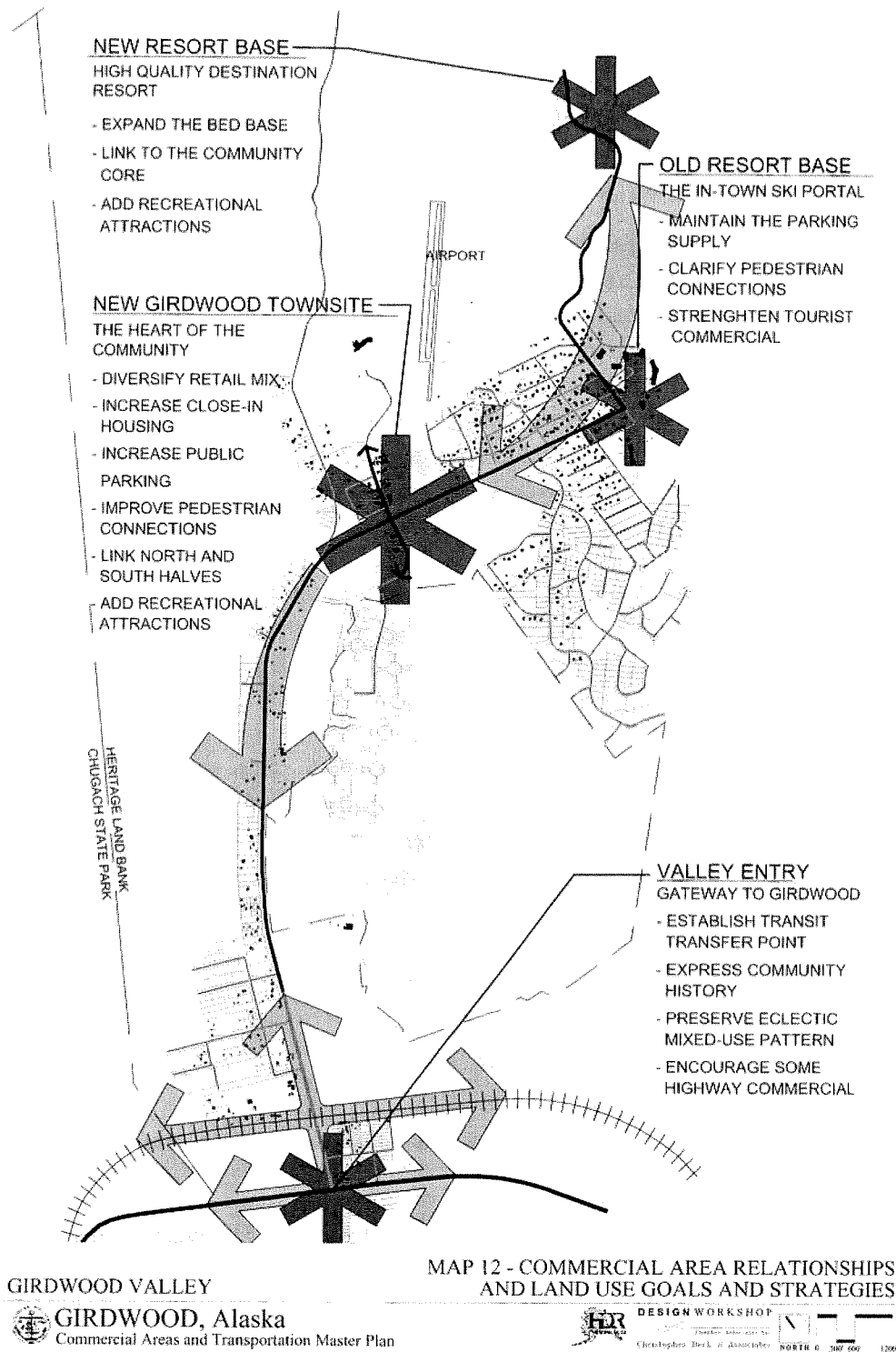
The conclusion of this plan is that it is not a question of if, but rather when new commercial space in Girdwood will be needed. While the exact timing of commercial expansion cannot be projected with certainty, the future need for additional commercial development is highly likely.

The Area plan has thus been designed to reserve space for future commercial uses within an evolving network of local roads that will allow the greatest flexibility over time. The Plan considers it particularly important to reserve space for a local-serving grocery store and related support uses<sup>1</sup>, which require more area than is available in the lots on the north side of the New Girdwood Townsite.

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<sup>1</sup>Several sources were checked for rules of thumb regarding the sizes of population required to support various sized grocery stores. There are no definite ratios; the answer varies greatly depending on site specific factors, particularly the level of competition, mix of resident and visitor demand, and the relative wealth of the population. Two interesting findings are noted here because they concern communities similar in size to Girdwood. The first is a study by Iowa State University Extension (2000-2001) documenting the average number of people required to support a grocery store in Iowa (2,941), Maine (2,958), Nevada (2,513), and Oklahoma (2,869). The second is the experience of Big Lake, Alaska. A community of 2,600 people, Big Lake supports a very successful 10,000 square foot independent grocery store. The store—Steve’s—which is known for good produce and meat, is the anchor store in a small shopping center serving local residents, second-home owners, and visitors.

Figure 2.2 Girdwood Commercial Area Relationships. Girdwood Commercial Areas and Transportation Plan (2001)





## Planning Implications

Alaska is known for its boom and bust economy. Likewise, the state of the national and global economy is complex and unpredictable. Given these realities, any prediction about Girdwood's future must be taken for what it is—an informed guess. Nonetheless, in a growing world and a growing state, the odds of continued growth in Girdwood are strong because:

- Girdwood is an attractive community and destination resort with good access
- Alyeska Resort, under new ownership, is making significant investments in marketing, accommodations, and on-mountain facilities
- There is a limited amount of land available for new development
- The State of Alaska is poised to construct a multi-billion dollar gas pipeline, which will invigorate the state economy

The Girdwood real estate market is already showing signs of pressure exerted by a healthy regional economy and growing population:

- Residential properties are expensive relative to other Alaskan markets and residential properties are in limited supply
- Existing commercial space is nearly all filled; the South Townsite and the resort are the two remaining areas with significant commercial development potential
- Low-to-Moderate-priced housing is one of the most needed types of residential development in Girdwood

Furthermore, rising gas prices are likely to affect individuals' transportation choices in the future, encouraging a reduction in the number and length of car-based trips. This trend will only support the need for Girdwood to offer a range of housing options mixed with commercial and civic uses, all clustered into a walkable, compact environment, as envisioned in this and several previous planning efforts. In particular, the 1999 CAT Plan limited commercial sites in the North and South Townsite to preserve Girdwood's small-town community character and to protect against sprawl along the Alyeska Highway.

## **Conclusion**

Limited land supply and increasing demand for residential and commercial development has the potential to change the character of Girdwood. Those with more moderate incomes are in danger of being squeezed out of the housing market, and local businesses may face stiffer competition from regional and national chains with greater capital resources. This master plan proceeds from the basic assumption that growth is likely and must be planned in order to foster Girdwood's economic vitality and nurture its sense of community. The Plan recommends that space for commercial and residential uses be reserved to balance other existing and future public and civic uses in Girdwood's South Townsite.



### 3. THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

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#### Boundaries of the Study Area

The small community of Girdwood is located about forty miles southeast of Anchorage on the Seward Highway. It is a loose collection of single-family and duplex residences, condominiums and small commercial businesses at the base of the ski mountain at Alyeska Resort. The intended core of the community is the New Girdwood Townsite, which was platted after a large part of the original townsite at the edge of Turnagain Arm subsided in the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake. While most of the platted lots in the New Girdwood Townsite are on the north side of Alyeska Highway, the largely undeveloped area south of the highway—more recently referred to as the South Townsite—is being viewed as a prime location for the development of a variety of land uses that cannot be accommodated on the north side.

The Girdwood South Townsite study area encompasses approximately 200 acres, located south of Alyeska Highway between Glacier Creek and California Creek and continuing south to Ruane Road (See Map 1.1 Girdwood South Townsite Study Area.). California Creek forms the western boundary of the study area; Glacier Creek forms the eastern boundary.

This chapter describes wetland conditions, hydrology, vegetation, and wildlife habitat in the study area. Descriptions are based on aerial imagery, mapped data, previous studies, and field observations. The objective of this chapter is to present a very general picture of the natural factors that pose development constraints, reducing the total amount of land in the South Townsite that is suitable for development.

#### Natural Features

##### Topography

The topography of the study area is generally flat, with very little relief and no significant terrain features, making the terrain within the study area well-suited for development. The north end of the study area, near the Alyeska Highway, is at an elevation of about 100 feet above sea level. The south end of the study area at Ruane Road is at an elevation of approximately 50 feet above sea level, for an average north to south downhill slope of about one percent over a distance of approximately one mile. In the few areas where the terrain slopes, gradients are generally less than five percent. There are some areas of steeper slopes, such as banks and alluvial terraces along the creeks, but those areas have less than four to six feet of elevation change.

## Soils

The study area is generally covered by alluvial soils of various depths. The alluvial deposits are primarily composed of sand and gravel, with some layers of silt. Commonly found on the lower terraces and floodplain of Glacier Creek and the outwash fans of California, Alyeska, and Virgin Creeks, alluvial soils drain well and have adequate bearing strength to be considered generally suitable for building and road foundations.

## Vegetation

Black Cottonwood, the tallest native western hardwood, is the dominant vegetation in the study area. These large, fast-growing trees occupy the well-drained floodplain of Glacier Creek and the alluvial fans of California and Virgin Creeks, where groundwater supports their extensive and aggressive root systems. The dominant species of low shrub and scrub vegetation in the valley are alder, willow and Devil's Club, a prickly, berry-producing understory shrub typical of moist boreal forest ecosystems in northwest Pacific coastal areas.



## Fish Habitat

All five species of salmon, along with Dolly Varden and hooligan, migrate up Turnagain Arm and to the tributaries along the Arm. The predominant fish species found in Glacier Creek are Pink, Coho, and King Salmon, in addition to some Steelhead Trout and Dolly Varden. No substantial fish spawning occurs in the study area; fish spawning typically occurs in clearer running streams. Fish tend to avoid spawning in glacially fed, braided streams because those channels are unpredictable and frequently shift. The most significant fish spawning in the Girdwood Valley occurs in California Creek, north of the Alyeska Highway and up to the Crow Creek Road. There is a significant fish milling area at the confluence of California Creek and Glacier Creek. The small tributaries and wetland complexes of California Creek and Glacier Creek are important fish-rearing areas.

## Wildlife Species and Habitat

Because the Girdwood Valley is located between coastal and boreal ecosystems, it supports a wide variety of wildlife species. Large mammals that can be found in the study area



include moose, black bears, and brown bears. The lowlands in the valley, particularly the riparian lands along Glacier Creek, are important winter habitat for moose.

Furbearers found in the area include beavers, minks, river otters and weasels. Smaller animals include squirrels, porcupines, snowshoe hares, voles and shrews.

Many bird species also exist in the area. These include bald eagles, hawks, owls, ducks, geese, swans, ptarmigan, spruce grouse, ravens, magpies, and a large variety of resident and seasonal passerines.

## Hydrology

Except along the northern edge of the study area defined by the highway, all sides of the study area are constrained by floodways and floodplains associated with California Creek and Glacier Creek. The study area contains a total of only 17 acres that are above the 100- and 500-year floodplains. The floodway for Glacier Creek at the north end of the study area is relatively narrow, approximately 200 feet in width. As Glacier Creek flows southward, the channel widens, eroding the creek banks, and the floodway widens to as much as 600-700 feet.

The 100-year floodplain of Glacier Creek impacts the development potential of the entire study area, but the impact is by far the greatest in the southern two-thirds of the site. From Ruane Road northward nearly half a mile, the study area is entirely within the 100-year floodplain.

California Creek runs in a fairly narrow channel, and the width of its floodway is not more than 150 feet at any point through the study area. The California Creek floodway minimally impacts the study area, as it coincides with the delineation of existing wetlands, which would make development unrealistic in any case. The 100-year floodplain for California

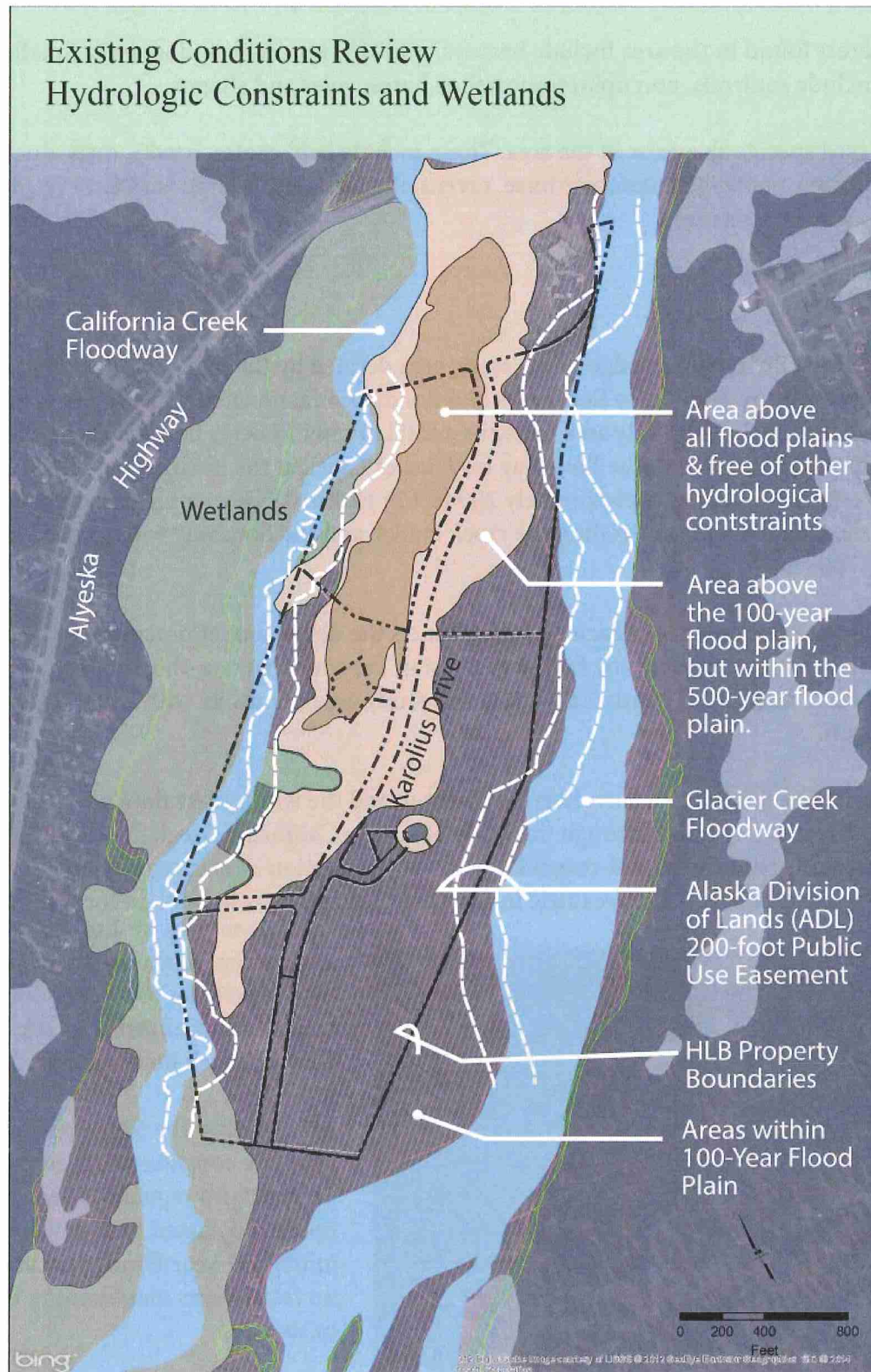
Creek is mostly west of the study area, except in the southern portion, where the 100-year floodplains from California Creek and Glacier Creek flow together.



Areas within the 500-year flood plain are considered developable. There are no regulatory requirements associated with development in the 500-year flood plain and no restrictions on obtaining flood insurance.



Map 3.1 Existing Conditions Review, Hydrologic Constraints and Wetlands



There are patent easements of 200 feet and 50-foot access easements along both sides of the Glacier and California Creeks. These easements are measured from the ordinary high water mark. The patent defines the easement as a "Public Easement" and the Alaska Division of Lands 20105 "Final Decision" dated February 28, 1978 further describes acceptable uses within the easement as: *"Public access, recreation, and the need to protect wildlife habitat areas where considered and public easements are reserved in this decision for such purposes"*. Since the easements for the two creeks are tied to ordinary high water, their locations may vary depending on stream movement. While the 200-foot easement has an impact on development potential in the northern section of the study area, most of area elsewhere within the easement coincides with wetlands and floodplains on California Creek to the west or within the floodway of Glacier Creek to the east. The southernmost section of the study area is completely constrained by the convergence of California and Glacier Creek easements, wetlands and floodplains.

## **Wetlands**

The western and southern margins of the study area are substantially impacted by wetlands. Most of the wetlands in this area are considered floodplain wetlands and open meadow bogs. The floodplain wetlands mostly overlie unconsolidated surficial soils, and the open meadow bogs overlie peat deposits commonly found in low-relief depressions on large river terraces. Within the South Townsite Area, wetlands are most closely associated with California Creek. On the Glacier Creek side of the area there are very few mapped wetlands.

Floodplain wetlands in the Girdwood Valley occur in alluvium, primarily along the floodways of the major streams and tributaries. These habitats are dominated by deciduous thickets and interspersed with large Black Cottonwood trees. Some beaver ponds and pools are found along Glacier and California Creeks. These wetlands provide important flood control, water quality and fish habitat functions, especially in the study area where the terrain is flatter and the streams interact with adjacent wetlands.

Wetland areas were identified for this master plan using previous wetland delineations and mapping done by the Municipality, as well as wetland delineations performed in October 2005 for the Boutet Company by Oasis Environmental, an Army Corps of Engineers-certified wetland delineator according to Alaska Wetland Mapping Conventions.

Known as the triple parameter approach, the methodology employed in these delineations was adapted from Section D (Routine Determinations) and Section F (Atypical Situations) of the US Army Corps of Engineers manual. This approach defines wetlands as only those areas where all three essential characteristics of wetlands (hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils and wetland hydrology) are present.

Within the study area, there are 53 acres of Class A (high-value) wetlands that had been previously mapped by the Municipality of Anchorage. An additional 40 acres of wetlands have been preliminarily delineated by Oasis Environmental. Most of the additional acreage is along the western and southern edges of the study area, with two small wetlands areas in the southeastern section. The southernmost portion of the study area is completely covered in Class A or preliminarily delineated wetlands.

## **Summary of Environmental Constraints**

Like all of Girdwood, thin soils, a high water table, and drainage issues will present development challenges. However, the most significant environmental constraints in the South Townsite area will be related to the creeks on the site's east and west sides: Over half of the site is rendered potentially undevelopable by delineated wetlands, floodways, and floodplains (See Map 3.2 Environmental Constraints).

With seasonally high flows, constantly shifting channel beds and eroding banks, Glacier and California Creeks subject a large portion of the study area to periodic flood hazards. The only land uses allowed by the Anchorage Municipal Code (Title 21) in flood hazard zones are parks and playgrounds, although built structures may be allowed in these areas if they meet requirements to minimize damage from flooding. Of the estimated total site area of slightly less than 200 acres, only about 100 acres—a little more than 50 percent of the site—is deemed suitable for development. This includes 83 acres within the 100-year floodplains of both creeks. More detailed environmental evaluation will need to be conducted to support any specific development proposals in the South Townsite.

## **Aesthetics and the Natural Landscape**

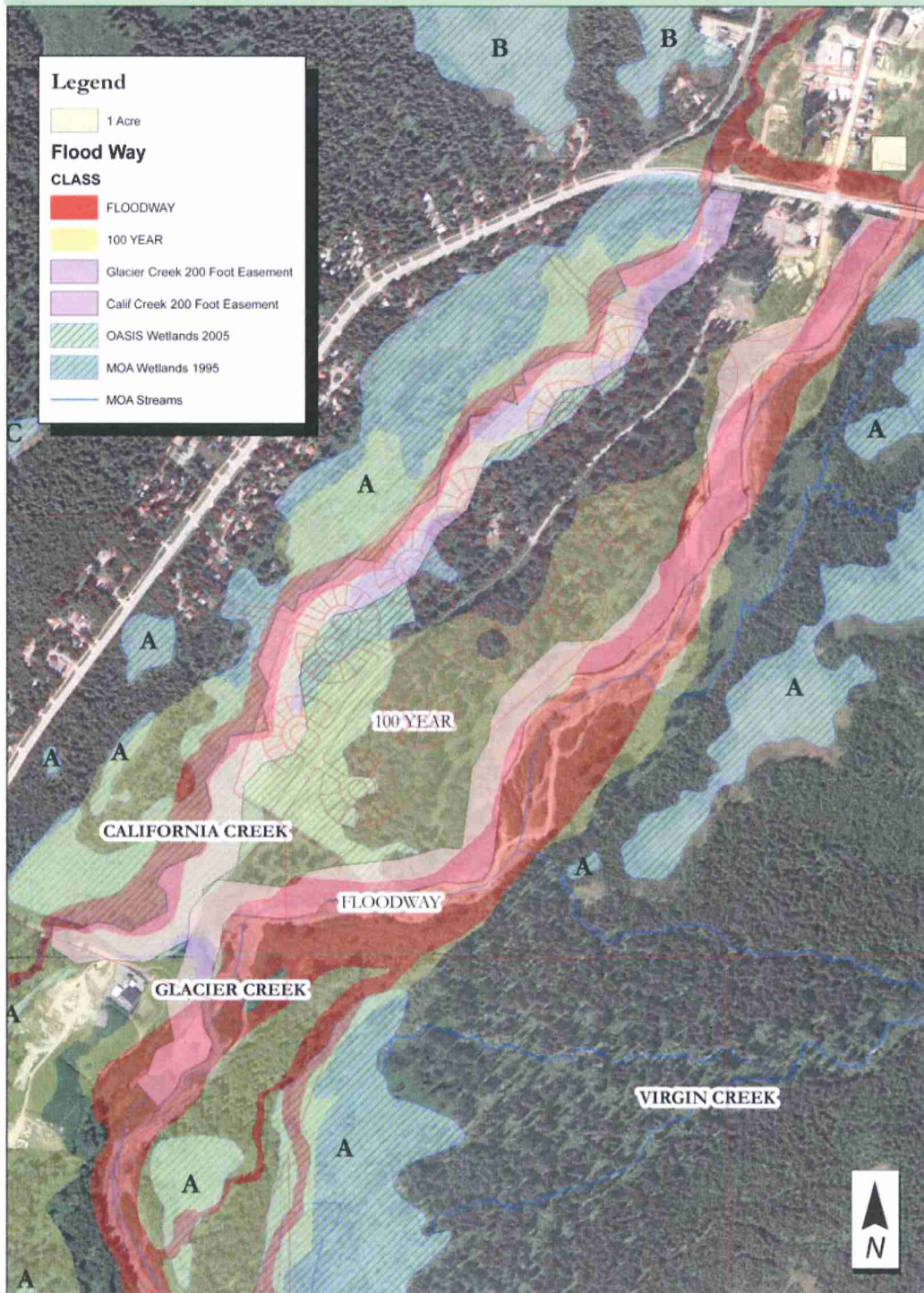
In an area where the natural landscape is as visually dominant as it is in Alaska, master planning efforts must take into account not only the physical conditions and development constraints on a site, but also the aesthetic character of the landscape that provides such a dramatic setting for development as well as important clues for physical design.

Girdwood residents place a high value on particular qualities of the natural landscape in the South Townsite area: the terrain is flatter and somewhat more open than elsewhere in Girdwood; clearings in the northern portion of the site open up panoramic mountain views and welcome access to sunlight; and trails through the woods, connecting to rivers on both east and west, offer unique nature experiences. Sun, views and walkable connections to civic facilities in the area are probably more highly valued than the deciduous vegetation. However, the trees provide a sense of shelter and human scale in an oversized landscape.



**Map 3.2 Existing Conditions Review, Environmental Constraints**

## Existing Conditions Review Environmental Constraints



0 250 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 Feet

Girdwood South Town Site  
Master Plan

From a planning standpoint, there are several ways in which these qualities might influence policy-making and site planning:

- Retaining groves of trees and natural vegetation within areas of development and as buffer zones along Glacier and California Creeks will be important in softening the visual impact of future buildings, roads, and parking. It will also help to retain Girdwood's more rustic, less urban character as a community.
- Identifying exceptional viewpoints and preserving viewlines to important landmarks in the distance (Mount Alyeska, for example) will be essential in creating a unique sense of place for this new neighborhood.
- Locating trails and activity areas with particular care for solar access, views, protection from weather, and continuity of connections.
- Taking advantage of opportunities to use natural water features to enhance both the character of the built environment and the quality of people's experience of the natural setting.





## 4. ZONING AND LAND USES

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### Land Ownership

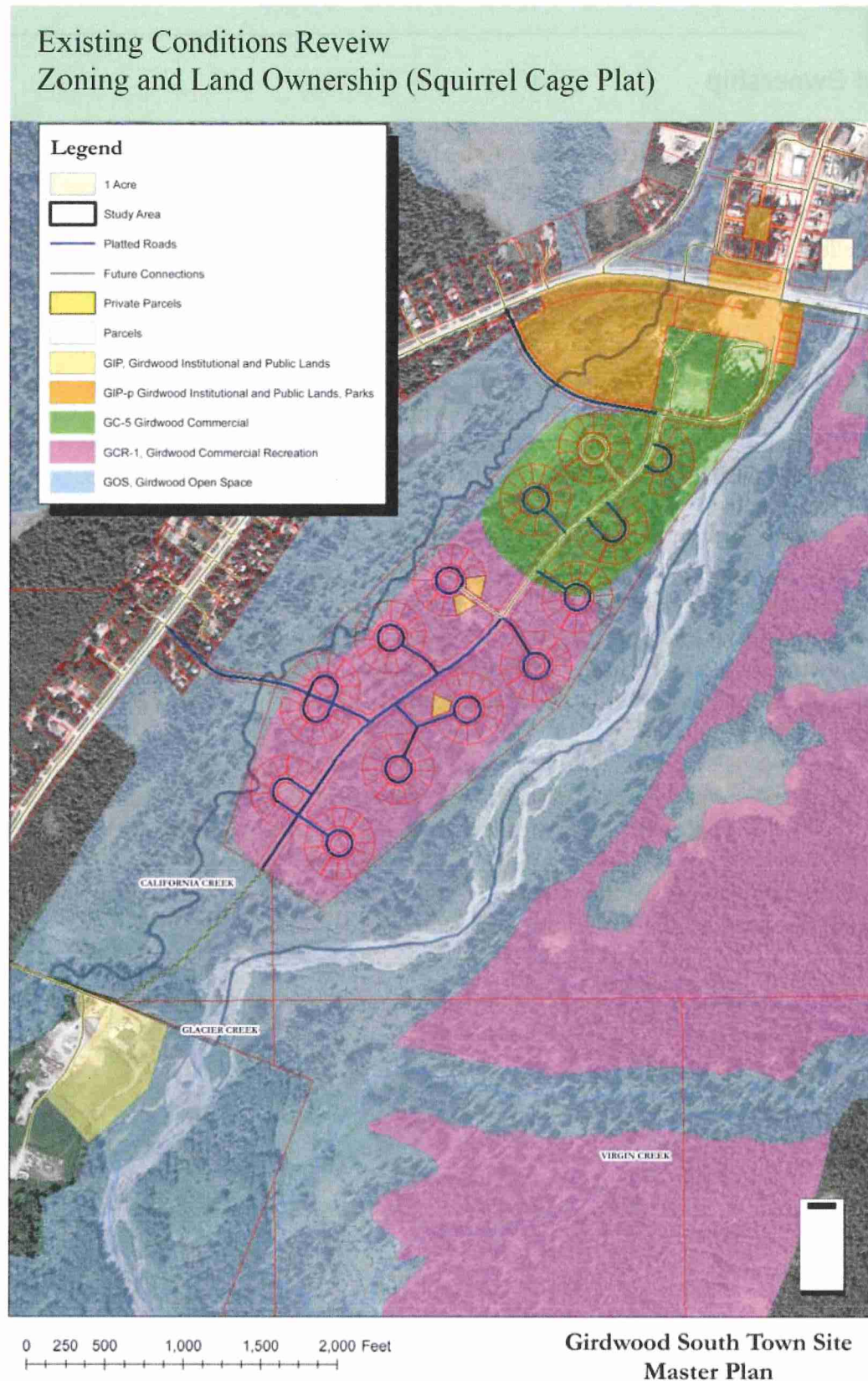
The Girdwood Townsite First Addition was surveyed by the Alaska Housing Authority in June of 1965 following the Good Friday Earthquake in 1964. It includes the areas known as the North and South Townsites and the Squirrel Cages. The survey was part of the State's effort to relocate Girdwood's townsite further up the valley, away from the flooded area along Turnagain Arm. The plat was recorded by the State of Alaska in July of 1966.

The State of Alaska transferred ownership of the newly platted area to the City of Girdwood in 1966. Then, in 1972, the land was transferred to the Greater Anchorage Area Borough. All this land became part of the Municipality of Anchorage when the City of Anchorage and the Greater Anchorage Area Borough incorporated as a first-class city in 1975. Map 4-1 shows the property as it existed from 1966 to December of 2013.

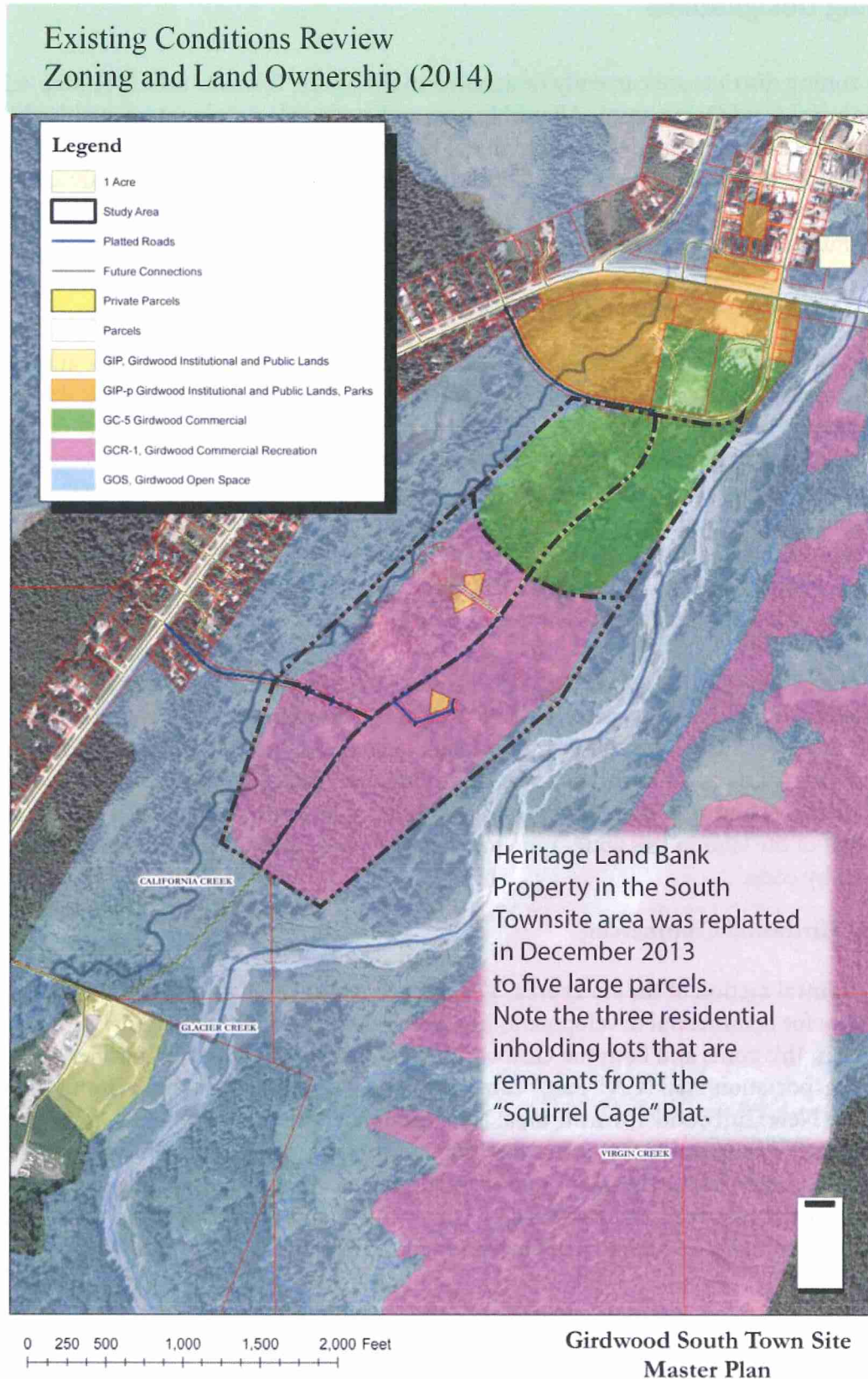
In December of 2013, the property of the Girdwood South Townsite was replatted into 5 large parcels with three residential tracts as remnant inholdings. Although physical constraints remain for development of this property, the new plat will allow much greater flexibility for future development. Map 4-1 shows what is referred to as the Squirrel Cage plat. Note the three parcels under private ownership. Map 4-2 shows the Heritage Land Bank (HLB) property as it has been replatted with the privately held parcels still included in the property.

With the exception of the three privately-owned residential homesites that are remnants of the Squirrel Cage plat, the study area is owned entirely by the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), with the Heritage Land Bank (HLB) having management authority of the majority of the area. Unless the three lots are repurchased by HLB, any future development in the South Townsite will be required to maintain legal access to them.

**Map 4.1, Squirrel Cage Plat**







## **Zoning Designations**

Four zoning districts are currently designated in the South Townsite area (See Map 4.2 Zoning and Land Ownership). Allowable uses and applicable development standards in each of these districts are described in detail in Chapter 21.09, the Girdwood section of the Anchorage Municipal Land Use Code. The four zoning districts in the study area are: GCR-1 Girdwood Commercial Recreation, GC-5 Girdwood Commercial, GPI-p Girdwood Public and Institutional Lands and Parks, and GOS Girdwood Open Space.

### **GCR-1 - Girdwood Commercial Recreation**

The original intent of GCR-1 zoning was to allow development of a golf course and facilities normally associated with a golf course. Other possible uses include nordic ski trails, campground or RV park and other activities related to commercial recreational development. Residential development may also occur as a secondary use, related to recreational activities in the area. The corollary intent of this zoning designation is to maintain scenic and natural beauty and to ensure that development impacts are minimized. The GCR-1 zone was established anticipating the development of a golf course, which never came to fruition. Consideration should be given to replacing the GCR-1 zone with a zone that better encompasses possible uses in the area.

The South Townsite area zoned GCR-1 is located in the southern section of the study area and totals approximately 65 acres. Of this total area, approximately 14 acres are developable: they lie outside the 100-year floodplain and contain no wetlands. An additional 25 acres are located within the 100-year floodplain but could potentially be developed at additional cost and risk. Including the area within the 100-year floodplain, a little more than half of the land in this zone, approximately 39 acres, could be developed for the uses allowed by code.

### **GC-5 - Girdwood Commercial**

In the central section of the study area, 37 acres are zoned GC-5. These are intended primarily for commercial development; however, residential and recreational uses are also allowed in this zone, and both the Girdwood Area Plan (GAP) and the Commercial Areas and Transportation Plan (CAT Plan) considered these multiple uses important to the vitality of the New Girdwood Townsite area. No commercial uses currently exist in the portion the South Townsite zoned GC-5, but the intent of this zoning designation is to encourage a blend of commercial, institutional, and recreational uses that will, over time, anchor an active mixed-use core area. Of the total area zoned GC-5, approximately 22 acres are outside the creek easements and are free of environmental constraints.

## **GIP, GIP (-p) - Public Lands and Institutional Lands and Parks**

The northernmost part of the study area consists of about six acres adjacent to the Alyeska Highway and is zoned GIP(-p), which applies to parks and public institutions. All of the property in this area is dedicated park land, owned by the MOA and managed by the MOA Parks and Recreation Department. All of the uses currently on this parcel are recreational facilities: the tennis courts, skateboard park, and children's playground.

## **GOS - Girdwood Open Space**

All of the remaining land in the South Townsite study area is zoned GOS, applying to areas that are wetlands, in the floodway, or within the 200-foot Glacier Creek and California Creek easements. The code allows the boundary of the zone to be moved, but the total acreage zoned open space within the study area cannot be reduced.

## **Existing Land Uses**

The majority of the study area is undeveloped. Most of the developed parcels are situated close to Alyeska Highway and accessed from Egloff Drive. The study area contains three privately owned residential homesites, two of which have structures on them. With that exception, the developed parcels are all owned by the MOA and managed either by the HLB, Anchorage Fire and Rescue, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department or Anchorage Municipal Libraries. The built facilities in this area include Glacier City Hall, Little Bears Playhouse childcare center, the Girdwood Fire Station, Girdwood Community Club/Glacier City Radio, and the newly completed Girdwood Library and Community Room.

## **Existing Parks and Recreational Uses**

There are several constructed recreation facilities in California Creek Park and Girdwood Park: the kids' playground, the baseball field, skateboard park, and tennis courts. California Creek Park contains the Marlow and Nissman Pavilions. Both California Creek Park and Girdwood Park are dedicated parks. The area where the ballfield is located is maintained by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department, but it is not on dedicated park land.

## **California Creek Park**

California Creek Park is located off the Alyeska Highway, next to Girdwood Park. It was established in 1966 and dedicated in 1990, and is the location of the annual Forest Fair held on the first weekend in July. The 12.53-acre site includes land on both sides of California Creek. Amenities include pathways, some playground equipment and two covered pavilions.



## **Girdwood Park**

Girdwood Park is located in the northernmost part of the Girdwood South Townsite study area paralleling Alyeska Highway.

The park is 2.78 acres in size and includes a play area for children, a skateboard park, and two tennis courts. The MOA Parks and Recreation Department manages the park. The park was established in 1966 and dedicated in 1984. The Girdwood Skateboard Park, children's playground, and tennis courts were constructed

with a combination of local fundraising, grants and Municipal park funds. Built mostly by volunteer labor, they are central to Girdwood community life. Some of these facilities are currently slated for upgrades; grant applications are pending.



## **Lions Park**

Lions Park is located in the northeast corner of the study area. Consisting of 0.85 acres, it contains picnic tables and offers beautiful views of Glacier Creek. Though platted as four parcels, the park is unlikely to be subdivided or developed, as it is located in an area with significant environmental constraints. It provides an excellent buffer between Alyeska Highway and Egloff Drive to the north and west and the open space corridor of Glacier Creek to the east. Lions Park is managed by the MOA Parks and Recreation Department.

## **The Baseball Field**

The baseball field, home of the Girdwood Little League team, was built by community members. In the past years, the field has hosted as many games as the fields in Anchorage.



## Disc Golf



Disc golf (frisbee golf) has been part of California Creek Park for many years. Previously, it was an informal course that used designated trees, trashcans, posts, and benches as targets. In 2006, nine official disc golf baskets were purchased by the MOA Parks and Recreation Department and installed throughout the park and adjacent HLB land. An additional 9 baskets have since been installed to complete an 18 hole disc golf course. A small group of volunteers designed a course around existing park structures, designated T-boxes to throw from, cleared fairways of bushy vegetation and placed disc golf baskets in concrete foundations to be used as the targets.

The maintenance of the disc golf course is accomplished entirely through volunteer efforts. The biggest task is keeping the fairways cleared of emerging vegetation. When special events such as Forest Fair or summer music shows use the park, many of the baskets are temporarily removed to avoid interference with the event.

In 2007, all-weather signs were designed and fabricated. A sign at the first hole shows the overall layout of all eighteen baskets in the park, and signs at each T-box show new users where to go next and where the target basket is for that hole. The signs were paid for by Parks and Recreation and were installed using volunteer help in the summer of 2008.

## The Marlow Pavilion

The Marlow Pavilion, located in California Creek Park, was built by community members. Two chainsaw-cut log bears in the likeness of two past Girdwood residents guard the pavilion, which provides shelter for events and general use.





## **The Nissman Pavilion**



The Nissman Pavilion, dedicated on June 4, 2007, was designed and built in memory of Jeff Nissman, who was killed by a roof avalanche while working for the US Forest Service in Portage, Alaska. The estimated cost of construction for the pavilion's authentic timber frame would have been \$90-\$100,000, but it was built by volunteers and the Nissman Memorial Fund funded the \$30,000 cost of materials. The 30-by-30-foot structure can be reserved through the Girdwood Parks and Recreation Department.

## **The Girdwood Campground**

The Girdwood campground, located near the ballfield and the Nissman Pavilion, was completed in 2008 for summer use. Extensive volunteer effort has gone into building the campground. Managed and funded by the MOA Parks and Recreation Department, the campground provides 18 tent-only sites with picnic tables on permanent wood chip pads. One campsite is ADA-accessible, with stable gravel access and pad to accommodate wheelchairs.



Parking for the campground is located near the pavilion and the ball field, with access to campsites via a looped path. No firepits or barbecues are located at individual sites; instead, two barbecues are located outside each end of the Nissman Pavilion. Portable out-houses, bear-proof food lockers, and bear-proof trash receptacles have been installed. An on-site host collects fees, monitors the sites, and sells firewood from June through August.

## **The Iditarod National Historic Trail**

The Iditarod National Historic Trail and a network of informal connections run through the study area. (See the Circulation section of Chapter 6.)

## **Other Uses**

Other Uses include the volleyball courts and horseshoe toss, located in Girdwood Park.

## **Existing Civic Uses and Public Facilities**

### **The Girdwood Fire Station**

The Girdwood Fire Station was constructed on its current site on Egloff Drive in 2001. It was built to replace the old fire station, which was renamed Glacier City Hall and is now used for MOA Parks and Recreation storage. The 6,000-square-foot fire station is home to Girdwood Fire and Rescue, a nonprofit organization under contract to the MOA to provide fire, rescue and EMS services to the Girdwood Fire Service District and the Turnagain Arm community. The station houses several types of vehicles and equipment, including three pump-trucks, one medic rig and a mobile command unit. A Fire Chief, two assistant chiefs, four captains and a host of volunteers provide service.



### **Scott and Wesley Gerrish Branch Library**

The Scott and Wesley Gerrish Branch Library is located on Egloff Drive adjacent to the fire station and Glacier Creek in the Girdwood South Townsite. The 4,000-square-foot facility is attached to the south side of the existing fire station complex. Construction began on the library in April 2007 and finished in the spring of 2008. The library replaces an undersized 1,500-square-foot library located adjacent to the Girdwood Elementary and Junior High School. The new library features not only areas for books, reference materials and reading, but also a community meeting room and office space for the Girdwood Board of Supervisors and the Girdwood Parks and Recreation Department.

### **Glacier City Hall**

Glacier City Hall is a 1,500-square-foot structure built and used as a fire station until the new fire station was built in 2001. It currently houses Parks and Recreation storage.

### **Little Bears Playhouse Inc.**

Little Bears Playhouse Inc. was founded in 1981 by the parents of Girdwood to provide quality childcare services for Girdwood families. Little Bears currently occupies a 6,000-square-foot building, constructed in 1967 for the Girdwood Community Club. The facil-

ity can serve approximately 20 children per day. Little Bears is currently seeking to build a new facility of around 9,000 square feet to serve up to 60 children as Girdwood grows. The new building is designed with two preschool classrooms (16 children each), two toddler classrooms (10 children each), one infant room (8 infants) and associated support spaces, including conference, kitchen and community gathering spaces. One goal of this master planning effort is to identify a general location for the new building.

### **The Girdwood Community Club**

The Girdwood Community Club was founded in the late 1940s to promote education, information, communication, and recreation in the Turnagain Arm area and to operate community broadcast facilities and other non-profit communication and educational services. The club has initiated and promoted community enrichment projects and has been responsible for Girdwood's first school, fire department, library, theatre group, alpine ski area, community park, and KEUL-FM radio in Glacier Valley, as well as the relay television broadcast system along Turnagain Arm. The radio station and its programs are an important means of local communication and entertainment.

The Girdwood Community Club holds the deed to the building known as the "Old School" or "Old Library," currently occupied by KEUL-FM radio, that is adjacent to the children's playground. During the winter of 2007-08, volunteers of the nonprofit improved the radio station's studio. In 1997, the club began a search for a larger site that would provide the space to initiate additional community programs. Resolutions approved unanimously by the Girdwood Land Use Committee (1977), the Girdwood Board of Supervisors (GBOS), and the HLB Commission (1998) ask that "a long-term location for the community radio station [be] identified, and recommend to the HLB an expedient manner in which to transfer this land." The Club has spent the last fifteen years working with the HLB to identify suitable land for a new facility, preferably close to Glacier Creek in one of the areas highlighted on the plat map in Appendix D (page D-10).

### **Existing Residential Uses**

Three privately-owned small lots in the study area are in-holdings within the larger parcels of Heritage Land Bank property. These parcels are remnants of the old Squirrel Cage plat; they are the only lots ever sold in that subdivision. One lot is located on the platted Ivy Circle; the other two, both slightly less than 12,000 square feet, are located approximately one-third of a mile south of the intersection of Egloff Drive and Karolius Drive (See Map 4.2 Zoning and Land Ownership). On one lot a two-story, 879-square-foot home was built in 1986, as well as a couple of storage sheds and cabins.



## **Other Needs and Possible New Uses in the South Townsite**

### **New Locations Needed for Existing Uses**

Little Bears Playhouse, the Girdwood Community Club, and Glacier City Hall all need new facilities, preferably in the South Townsite. In recent years, Little Bears, advocates for a Community Recreation Center, and the Community Health Center have come together to promote development of a facility that can house all three. A concept for such a facility has been developed and the group is currently seeking funding. The new facility would be located on the west side of Karolius Drive, just below California Creek Park. The proposed location can be seen in Figure 8.1, Recommended Land Use Plan. The functions that currently take place in Glacier City Hall will be displaced if and when the existing building is demolished. Some of these uses can be accommodated in the library's new community room, but a new town hall or community center may eventually be needed to support growing civic and municipal functions.

### **Relocated Girdwood Health Clinic**

The Girdwood Clinic provides the Girdwood community with family practice and urgent care services. The Clinic is working with Turnagain Arm Health Center to establish the Girdwood Clinic as a Community Health Center (CHC). Currently located in a small building in Girdwood's North Townsite, the clinic plans to relocate in order to expand its facilities and services in order to better accommodate the health needs of the Girdwood community and the Turnagain Arm area. The Girdwood South Townsite is one possible relocation site. A current proposal exists for co-location of the Girdwood Clinic with Little Bears Playhouse in a new facility to be located in the South Townsite Area.

### **Displacement of Existing Facilities**

The Girdwood community has expressed concern that existing uses and facilities, located on lands controlled by the Heritage Land Bank, could be displaced by uses deemed to have a higher value. The Girdwood community strongly desires that a new suitable location be identified and the existing use or facility be relocated prior to any removal or demolition within the South Townsite Area.

**Table 4.1 Land Uses Desired by the Community**

	Existing Uses	Possible Future Additional Uses
CIVIC	Fire Station Library and Community Room Little Bears Playhouse Inc. KEUL Radio Glacier City Hall Girdwood Community Club	Charter High School Community Center Media Center Health Clinic
PUBLIC REC- REATION	California Creek Park Girdwood Park Ball Field Disc Golf Course Lions Park Campground Iditarod National Historic Trail/Other Trails	RV Park Improved Trail System Soccer Field Ice Skating Rink Swimming Pool Recreation Center
COMMERCIAL	None	Bank Drycleaner Grocery Hardware Store Barber Shop Outdoor Art Walk or Outdoor Market Professional Services (e.g. Dentist) Restaurants Coffee Shops Clothing Store Consignment/Second-Hand Store Gallery/Gift Shop Toy/Kids Store

The table above summarizes existing and possible new activities that could be located in the South Townsite. It was generated mainly from community input at the community workshop in November 2007 and later augmented and amended through discussions with the Townsite Subcommittee. Activities and land uses are not listed in any particular order and are not meant to show any degree of priority.

## **Existing Development and Design Standards**

Title 21, Chapter 9 of the Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC), which applies specifically to Girdwood, describes allowed land uses and development standards in the zones designated in the South Townsite study area. Among the provisions in Title 21.09 that will affect development in the South Townsite are standards for streets and parking, pedestrian circulation, and building height and design. The underlying objective of these standards is to assure that the distinct mountain character and natural environment of the Girdwood Valley are preserved and enhanced as development occurs. Title 21.09 also regulates the master planning process and the process by which zoning changes may be requested.

### **Municipal Code Requirement for Multiple Access Points**

Municipal standards and fire codes typically require new developments to have multiple access points to provide emergency access and connectivity. Of particular significance to future development in the South Townsite is a provision in Title 21.09 that limits the length of cul-de-sac streets to a maximum of 450 feet (21.09.070b.i.). By code, proposed streets longer than 450 feet must be connected to a second access road. The options for a second access into the South Townsite are limited: the existing platted right-of-way identified as Glacier Creek Drive extends from the “T” intersection of Egloff Drive and Karolius Drive to the Alyeska Highway. This proposed route would have to cross large wetlands on both sides of California Creek, as well as park land and this option does not provide a second access very far south into the site. The other two options include a connection from Karolius Drive to the Alyeska Highway via Juniper Road or a continuation of Karolius Drive to the existing Ruane Road in the south. The Juniper Drive roadway would require bridging of California Creek and the crossing of extensive wetlands. The Extension of Karolius Drive to Ruane would require a mile-long extension, much of it through wetlands. Both alternatives for second access are likely to be cost-prohibitive. Obtaining a variance from the cul-de-sac standard is unlikely. Fire Access Regulations that will apply to development in the study area include road standards to accommodate fire trucks and a requirement for sprinkling systems in certain multi-family residential developments. Two fire apparatus roads are needed if development exceeds the following thresholds:

- Developments totaling more than 62,000 square feet in area (or up to 124,000 square feet if buildings have sprinklers)
- Residential developments of more than 30 one or two-family dwelling units (If the units have sprinklers, there may be more units before a second access is required), and
- Residential developments of more than 100 multi-family dwelling units (or more than 200 multi-family dwelling units if the units have sprinklers).

The State and Municipality have adopted different standards on what level of multi-family development requires sprinklers; the Municipality requires sprinklers for all triplexes and greater, while the State requires sprinklers for buildings with more than 16 units and/or that are more than 2 stories in height. The International Fire Code allows townhouse style dwellings to be constructed without requiring sprinklers, but recent changes to the International Code Council may soon require sprinkler systems in all one and two-family dwellings. Fire apparatus roads can be less developed than typical vehicular roads conforming to municipal standards. Short spur roads without two ways in and out are allowed as long as fire trucks are able to get within 150 feet of the building(s). Fire code standards for emergency access roads include:

- Gravel surface or better;
- 20 to 26-foot minimum width (width depends on height of adjacent buildings and whether there is on-street parking)
- Able to support up to an 80,000-pound vehicle
- 10 percent maximum grade
- Can be gated, but must be maintained year round, and
- Turnaround with a minimum curve radius of 40 feet inside, 60 feet outside or a potential hammerhead configuration

Because the study area is outside the MOA permit zone, the State Fire Marshall reviews land use plans in Girdwood. The Fire Marshall can allow development today if there is a reasonably firm commitment to a road in the future.

The fire standards are a key to future development in the South Townsite Area. The small amount of truly developable land in the South Townsite Area makes it difficult to warrant the expense of bridge connections to the Alyeska Highway to the west or a long connection through wetlands to Ruane Drive, to the south.

Title 21, Chapter 9 also includes connectivity standards (AMC 21.09.070.F.6). This standard requires that no local street may be developed longer than 450 feet unless the street is connected to another street at each end. Additionally, the standard states that within contiguous residential or commercial developments, local streets shall have at least nine intersections per mile. It should be noted that a newly developed Egloff Drive or Korolius Drive in the South Townsite Area will serve as a Collector Roadway and is not subject to these connectivity requirements. Any local roads connecting to Egloff Drive or to Korolius Drive will be subject to those requirements.

## **Parking Standards**

AMC Title 21.09 sets forth design standards for streets, parking lots and pedestrian circulation that apply to the South Townsite. Provisions that relate to parking for non-residential uses allow some flexibility in locating off-site parking for commercial development: Required parking for any non-residential use in the GC-5 district may be located off-site within the adjoining right-of-way or within 600 feet of the site in community parking areas under a municipal parking agreement. However, parking lots are prohibited in any required setback in non-residential areas. There may be some flexibility in the calculation of required parking quantities, depending upon the mix of uses and proximity to alternate modes of transportation.

## **Architectural Design Standards**

AMC Title 21.09 includes building design standards intended to promote the architectural expression of Girdwood's distinct mountain character and natural environment. For general commercial and public/institutional buildings, AMC Title 21.09 recommends a "mountain building style" appropriate for Girdwood's climate, mountain valley setting, and small western mining town character. As landmarks, community buildings are intended to set a high architectural standard for the community.

Design standards in the code cover building mass, size and scale, building façade elements, storefronts, roof form, porches, entrances, arcades and roofed walkways, building materials, building colors, and accessory elements. The appearance of a smaller scale of architecture is encouraged; arrangements of smaller adjoining buildings are preferred over single larger building masses. Other elements mentioned in the code to enhance the quality of structures are ample windows; details that provide visual interest; porches with shed roofs to define building entries and protect them from adverse weather; and natural materials and colors.

The code also contains site development standards that encourage higher quality in the handling of grading, drainage and stormwater runoff, snow management, landscaping and vegetation, lighting, and signage.

AMC Title 21.09 includes standards for camping areas, which are a potential use in the southern portion of the South Townsite. These standards include minimum dimensions for roadways, maximum length of occupancy, minimum standards for amenities such as toilets and trash handling facilities, as well as campsite specifications.



### **Flood Hazard Regulations (Title 21.60)**

Portions of the Girdwood South Townsite study area are located within flood hazard districts. Under AMC Title 21.60, the only uses allowed in flood hazard zones are parks and playgrounds. Built structures may be allowed in these areas only if all necessary permits can be obtained and the structures meet requirements to minimize damage from flooding.



## 5. THE PLANNING CONTEXT

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The Girdwood community and the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) have been working together for more than ten years to shape Girdwood's growth in ways that will accommodate the need for new housing and commercial development and at the same time respect ecological constraints, protect the area's rural character, and retain its abundant access to open space. This chapter briefly describes the previously adopted master plans and other community planning efforts that have guided planners and policy-makers to date in efforts to promote appropriate development in Girdwood. In particular, it traces the evolution of some of the strategies and concepts incorporated into this master plan for the South Townsite area.

### 1995 Girdwood Area Plan

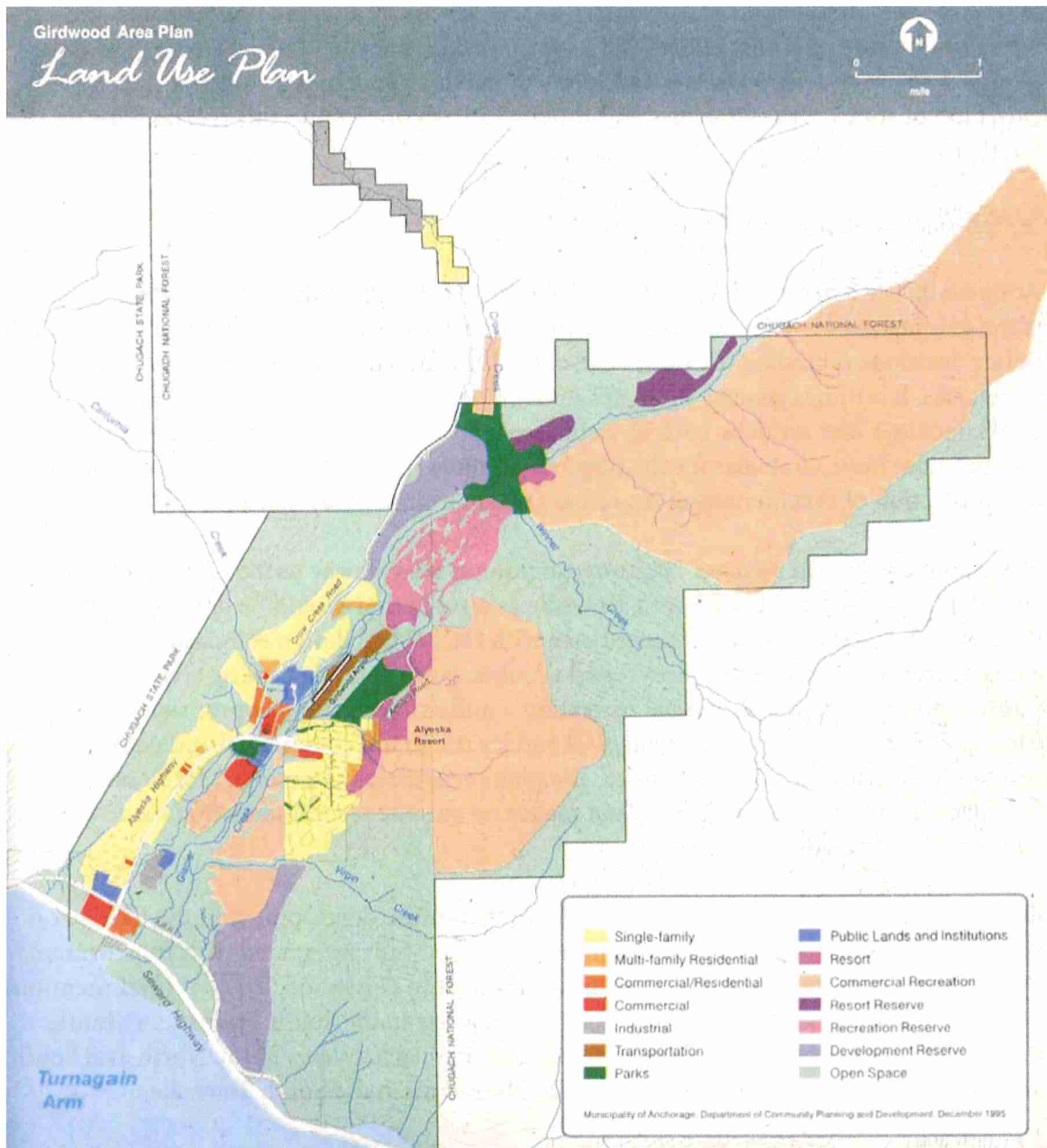
Adopted by the Anchorage Assembly in February 1995, the Girdwood Area Plan (GAP) is the guiding master plan for development in Girdwood. The plan was prepared to guide policy decisions regarding the future use of lands in the valley of Glacier Creek and its tributaries. It outlines general strategies for land development and the installation of major public facilities and services, such as water, sewer, transportation, parks, and trails, and also provides basic strategies for the disposal of municipal land, as well as the conservation and protection of certain natural resources and environmentally-sensitive areas.

The plan identifies the Alyeska Highway corridor as the gateway to the Girdwood Valley and highlights the Girdwood South Townsite as an area that should be developed under the auspices of a master plan in accordance with established design standards. It calls for a mix of uses in the Girdwood area – parks, public lands and open space, civic institutions, commercial and commercial recreation – and assigns zoning appropriate to those uses. The plan also allows housing as a secondary use in the commercial and commercial recreation areas of the South Townsite. The plan recognizes the potential for flooding from Glacier and California Creeks, but makes no specific recommendations as to how to address these hazards.

Other recommendations made in the GAP are that future development in the Girdwood South Townsite be compatible with adjoining uses and fully integrated with future circulation systems, both vehicular and pedestrian, planned in Girdwood. There is brief mention of an RV park and Campground as a potential new use in the South Townsite, a shuttle bus circuit connecting Alyeska Resort to the commercial activities in the North and South Townsites, and the continued location of the Forest Fair in the South Townsite.

At the time of this writing, the MOA Planning Department has announced its intention to reexamine and update the nineteen-year-old Girdwood Area Plan. A GAP Review Committee has been formed as a subcommittee of the GBOS Land Use Committee.

**Map 5.1, land Uses, Valley-wide, Map 10 (Girdwood Area Plan)**



## 2001 Girdwood Commercial Areas and Transportation Master Plan

The Girdwood Commercial Area and Transportation Master Plan (CAT Plan) was adopted by the Anchorage Assembly February 20, 2001. The CAT Plan was intended to provide further details on how to envision the GAP and “to move toward more specific strategies for public improvements and guidelines for private development based on the general recommendations in previous studies and plans” (CAT page 3). A master plan for the South Townsite is one of the recommendations in the CAT Plan (page 71).

The CAT Plan outlines a number of specific goals for the New Girdwood Townsite and illustrates these in a conceptual master plan that shows commercial and civic uses on both the north and south sides of Alyeska Highway (See Map 5.2 New Girdwood Townsite Concept Plan). The plan envisions that the New Girdwood Townsite as a whole would become the civic and commercial center of Girdwood, providing a mix of services and amenities to appeal to both locals and visitors.

A central concept in the CAT Plan is the improvement of Egloff Drive and Karolius Drive in those areas of the South Townsite that are zoned GC-5 as Girdwood’s new Main Street, with commercial and civic activities on both sides of the street, and as the primary link between the north and south portions of the townsite. In order to achieve the desired synergy between the north and south nodes in the New Girdwood Townsite area, the plan emphasizes the need for better, safer connections across Alyeska Highway. It recommends intersection improvements at Egloff Drive and the Alyeska Highway, consideration of a pedestrian underpass, and modifications of the highway beginning at the curve near Crow Creek Road to reduce speeds and mark the entry to the town core. Since the South Townsite Area Plan was finalized with the Planning and Zoning Commission, key aspects of the “Main Street” concept have been revisited and explored in greater detail. Some key changes identified by the community which impact the “Main Street” concept include:

- Elimination of a “Landmark” commercial or civic anchor at the intersection of Egloff Drive and the Alyeska Highway. This area is part of Girdwood Park. There is no desire in the Girdwood Community to re-zone the area to something other than park land
- Relocation of Egloff Drive to the East Side of the Fire Station and the Library
- Greater focus on civic and park uses in the South Townsite Area with commercial uses playing a supporting role to the civic uses
- Rejection of the concept of the underpass beneath Alyeska Highway due to a lack of engineering feasibility

These changes significantly alter the character of development in the South Townsite Area and call for a roadway connection that strongly supports pedestrian use for links to new civic facilities and existing parks, but does not focus on trying to create a “Main Street” character that is unlikely to ever develop. A newly developed Egloff Drive and Karolius Drive will have many characteristics similar to those described in the “Main Street”, such as on-street parking, but will not serve as an immediate link between higher density commercial development in the area. Rather than having attached sidewalks on both sides of the street, it may be more desirable to have a detached walkway with temporary snow storage between the street and the detached walkway. An update to the CAT Plan would be timely.

## **2007 Girdwood Area Community Survey**

As a preliminary step in the process to review and update the 1995 GAP, the Municipality conducted a community survey in 2007. According to the survey, some of the key concerns of the Girdwood community are:

- The need for future development to follow a master plan to avoid compounding existing problems with stressed infrastructure (frequent power outages, water lines, sewer service).
- The desire to see new development that conforms to stronger building design and site planning standards in order to maintain Girdwood’s unique character/small town feeling.
- The need for improved circulation, including commuter service between Girdwood and Anchorage, local bus service, and an emphasis on making Girdwood more pedestrian and bike-friendly.
- Concerns about affordability in Girdwood, especially affordable housing. Respondents expressed some support for housing in the Glacier Creek/Squirrel Cages/California Creek area, and for the New Girdwood Townsite area, but the majority supported residential development in the Crow Creek area, near the Alyeska Resort base area, or along Alyeska Highway/Lower Valley/Seward Highway.
- The need for more shops and services, including a better grocery store and other basic community businesses such as a local bank branch and a hardware store. The New Girdwood Townsite area (including both the North and South Townsites) received the most support for new commercial development, although respondents expressed some support for other possible locations along Alyeska Highway and in the northern portion of the South Townsite. Several respondents also expressed a desire for commercial areas to be located within walking distance for most residents and to be pedestrian-friendly.



- The need for more civic and recreational facilities, including a high school, a community recreation center, community pool, expanded ski terrain, and more hiking or Nordic trails.

## **Other Relevant Plans & Regulations**

### **Alyeska Resort Business Plan**

Under new ownership since late 2006, Alyeska Resort is planning a number of improvements at the resort and in partnership with the Municipality and other civic groups in Girdwood. Among the resort's initiatives are:

- An updated master plan for the resort: Improvements will be made to the resort's hotels, eateries, services and facilities, including increasing snow-making capacity and expansion into Winner Creek. The concept is to create a village setting integrated with beginner and intermediate slopes and to complete a number of improvements on the mountain (upgraded chair lifts, a new venue for downhill racing, Nordic tracks, programs for kids and skiers with physical disabilities).
- Construction of three two-story buildings with eight units each to provide housing for more than 100 employees in single and double-bedded apartments.
- Partnership with the MOA Public Transportation Office to support the Glacier Valley Stagecoach, providing local transportation service within Girdwood (See Chapter 6).
- Development plan to address community needs such as a high school, affordable housing, summer mountain biking, summer music venue, and more attractions and amenities for the hotel.

### **Girdwood Golf Course, Trail & Open Space Project Land Use Study (2001-2002)**

The purpose of the Girdwood Golf Course, Trail & Open Space Project Land Use Study was to refine the boundaries of lands that were to be leased for a golf course and associated open space uses in the lower Girdwood Valley. With the earlier Girdwood Area Plan, this subsequent study identified a large swath of Heritage Land Bank (HLB) land to be developed as a golf course in the southern portion of the area now included in the South Townsite Area Plan study area. Consistent with other plans, the golf course study also recommended a south-side connector roadway to serve the South Townsite study area. Although the recommendations of the study were generally supported, the Municipality has taken no action as of this writing and does not exclude a golf course option in the future. The likelihood of a future golf course at this location is considered very low.

## **Girdwood Community Impact Study (1993)**

“The Girdwood Community Impact Study assesses four community land-use scenarios based on population growth (ranging from 0.5 percent to 2.8 percent between 1993 and 2013) in relation to resort development. Major development impacts are assessed for each land-use scenario and possible mitigation measures are suggested. Of identified potential impacts, the extension of roads and utilities stands out. Mitigation measures focus on accommodating additional traffic, extending and upgrading utilities systems, and maintaining Girdwood’s small-town character by retaining greenbelts along major traffic corridors. This study was part of the comprehensive planning effort for the Girdwood Valley, including revision of the 1987 Turnagain Arm Comprehensive Plan.” (2001 Girdwood Commercial Areas and Transportation Master Plan, Appendix A, p1.)

## **Municipality of Anchorage Title 21, Chapter 9**

Title 21 of the Anchorage Municipal Code and Regulations codifies key elements of the plans identified above. Chapter 9 of that code specifically deals with Girdwood and it has a number of unique characteristics that deal with the South Townsite Area. The community of Girdwood has requirements for the development of “Area Plans” and “Development Plans” depending on the zoning district in Girdwood. Within the South Townsite area addressed in this plan, the northern portion is zoned gC-5 (New Townsite South Commercial) District and the southern portion (Phase 3) is zoned GCR-1 Commercial Recreation (Golf Course/Nordic Ski Course) District. The gC-5 District has a requirement for completion of an Area Plan prior to development, but it does not require preparation of a Development Plan. By contrast, the GCR-1 zone found in the southern portion of the South Townsite requires the preparation of a Development Plan, but does not require the preparation of an Area Plan. This South Townsite Area Plan is prepared in fulfillment of the requirements of Title 21 for the portion of the South Townsite zoned gC-5. Following is a description of purpose for both the Area Plans and the Development Plans.

### **Area Master Plan (21.09.030.E.1)**

An area master plan is intended to facilitate the planned development of large tracts of land under unified ownership or control, prior to subdivision or development of entire tracts or parcels within large tracts, in order to provide for land use compatibility and development responding to site-specific environmental constraints and opportunities. The area master plan shall establish the general arrangement of land uses, circulation and infrastructure systems for the identified development areas.

#### Development Plan (21.09.030.F.1)

A development master plan is intended to shape and manage future growth of a site and provide certainty to the community by stating a clearly articulated vision for the character, layout, and design of the site. At a minimum, the development master plan shall establish specific circulation systems; specific land uses; site dimensional, design, and development standards; and building design standards for the identified development areas. The intent of this process is for master planned areas to result in development meeting or exceeding the standards of this chapter, reflecting the character of Girdwood and the purposes of this chapter and Title 21.

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## 6. CIRCULATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

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### Existing Roads

#### Alyeska Highway

Alyeska Highway is the main arterial road providing ingress and egress to the Girdwood Valley. Alyeska Highway forms the northern border of the study area. The Alyeska Highway separates the Girdwood North Townsite from the South Townsite. The Alyeska Highway is maintained and controlled by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

#### Egloff Drive

Egloff Drive is the southern extension of Hightower Road, which edges the eastern side of the town square in the North Townsite. Egloff Drive is a 1,400-foot-long gravel road within a 70-foot dedicated right-of-way, extending south, then west to the junction with Karolius Drive. Egloff Drive will provide the primary access to the South Townsite for the immediate future and will link the public facilities of the fire station and library to the rest of the community.

#### Karolius Drive

Karolius Drive continues south from Egloff Drive for approximately 1,700 feet to provide access to the only developed parcel in the Squirrel Cage area. South of the junction of the residential inholding, there is only a platted, 70-foot right-of-way extending to the southern boundary of the Heritage Land Bank property; no road improvements have been made.

#### Ruane Road

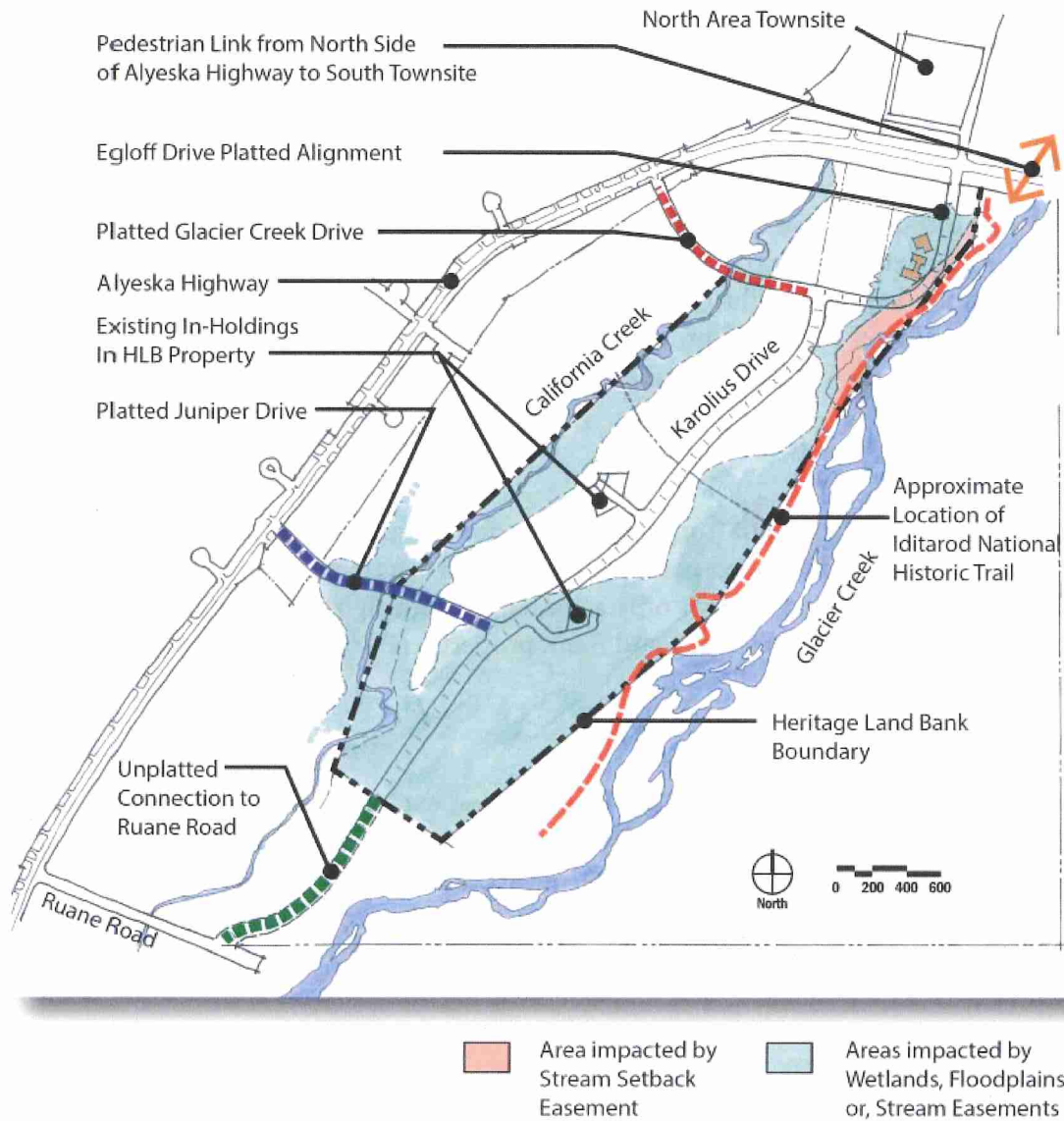
Ruane Road is connected to the Alyeska Highway and extends across California Creek to the southeast a distance of approximately 1,200 feet. It connects the AWWU facilities, Solid Waste Transfer Station, and Girdwood Industrial Park to the Alyeska Highway. The southern boundary of the Girdwood South Area Townsite is approximately a thousand feet to the north. Connection to Ruane Road is one possibility for obtaining a second point of access.

### Existing Rights-of-Way

Existing right-of-ways (ROW's) were platted with the original Girdwood Townsite First Addition subdivision in 1964. The ROW for major roads is 70 feet in width, while the access roads to individual lots are 50-foot ROW's. The major platted roads are Juniper (which connects Karolius Drive to the Alyeska Highway at the south end of the subdivision) and Glacier Creek Drive (which connects to the Alyeska Highway on the west from the junction of Egloff Drive and Karolius Drive).



**Map 6.1 Existing Conditions Review - Local Platted and Proposed Roads and Trails**



Existing Conditions Review  
Local, Platted and Proposed Roads and Trails

## **Traffic Analysis**

Because of the project study area's limited and recreationally-focused development, Egloff Drive and Karolius Drive are lightly travelled. Traffic counts for Alyeska Highway, between Crow Creek and Hightower Roads, indicate an Annual Average Daily Traffic count of 3,700 trips per day and an average annual growth exceeding 5 percent (cumulatively equaling 23 percent) over the most recent three years. The primary trip generator in the area is the Library/Community Center. The Little Bears Day Care Facility is a secondary generator of trips in the area. The skateboard park, playground and ball fields are also considered minor traffic generators. Current traffic within the study area is considered to

## **Post Development Traffic**

The proposed master plan calling for a civic oriented South Townsite Area will moderately increase traffic for the study area. Depending on the types of facilities constructed in Phases 1 and 2, there could be an increase of 1,000-2,000 trips per day. If at some point in the future, residential development is included in the area, that number could increase significantly. This would require upgrades to the Alyeska Highway/ Egloff Drive intersection, inclusive of auxiliary turning lanes with signalization or construction of a roundabout. The development of residential housing in the area would almost certainly require a second access road. and construction of a second access road would increase traffic simply because it offers an alternative to Alyeska Highway.

## **Phase One Development**

Phase One includes the new library and community center and the new fire station to be constructed at the current location. While the library/community building does generate additional trips in the area it is anticipated that the new fire station will maintain current use levels and will not result in any significant increase. Any future commercial development in Phase 1 may generate additional traffic, but with minor impact due to limited area available.

## **Phase Two Development**

Phase Two proposes a new multi-use community center that will house an expanded Little Bears Day Care Center, a community athletic facility, and a relocated and expanded health care center. Additional commercial development may be associated with these improvements. As plans for development proceed, a traffic impact analysis will be required to determine the impacts for traffic in the South Townsite Area.

## **Future Phase Development**

Beyond Phase 2, it is anticipated that there could be residential development in the South Townsite Area. Based on area available, an estimate of 43 residential units is estimated for development. At full build-out, these facilities are estimated to generate 400 vehicle trips per day, with a peak-hour volume of 40 vehicles. Peak volumes for comparable facilities typically occur in the evening, and the majority of movements are entering vehicles. Combined with Phases Two and Three, these traffic loads will require channelization (if these improvements were not constructed during Phase Two) and an updated evaluation of possible warrants for signalization for the Alyeska Highway/Hightower-Egloff intersection. A connection to Ruane Road would significantly reduce the impact of this development on Egloff Drive and its intersection with Alyeska Highway. The upgrades to Ruane Road will likely allow this traffic to be accommodated with minimal improvements to the Ruane/Alyeska Highway intersection.

## **2001 CAT Plan Recommendations for Circulation Improvements**

Recognizing the interdependence of transportation and commercial activity, the 2001 Girdwood Commercial Areas and Transportation Plan (CAT) made the following recommendations:

- Develop Egloff Drive and Karolius Drive (Hightower Drive in the CAT Plan) as Girdwood's Main Street
- Provide on-street public parking to support future activities and improvements in the New Girdwood Townsite
- Improve year-round pedestrian facilities and connections throughout the New Girdwood Townsite, adjacent parks, neighborhoods, and school

A central recommendation in both the earlier 1995 Girdwood Area Plan and the CAT Plan is the development of a collector road through the study area as a secondary access route in and out of the South Townsite and to provide convenient access to new development within the neighborhood. The route proposed for this road runs from the intersection of Alyeska Highway and Hightower Road, south on what is currently called Egloff Drive to Karolius Drive, and then continuing south to approximately the extent of the developable land in the South Townsite. At that point the route turns west to connect with the Alyeska Highway. The route of the proposed collector road, as shown on Map 11 of the CAT Plan, does not utilize the platted Juniper Road right-of-way or a connection to Ruane Road, but simply identifies the need for a connection to the Alyeska Highway.

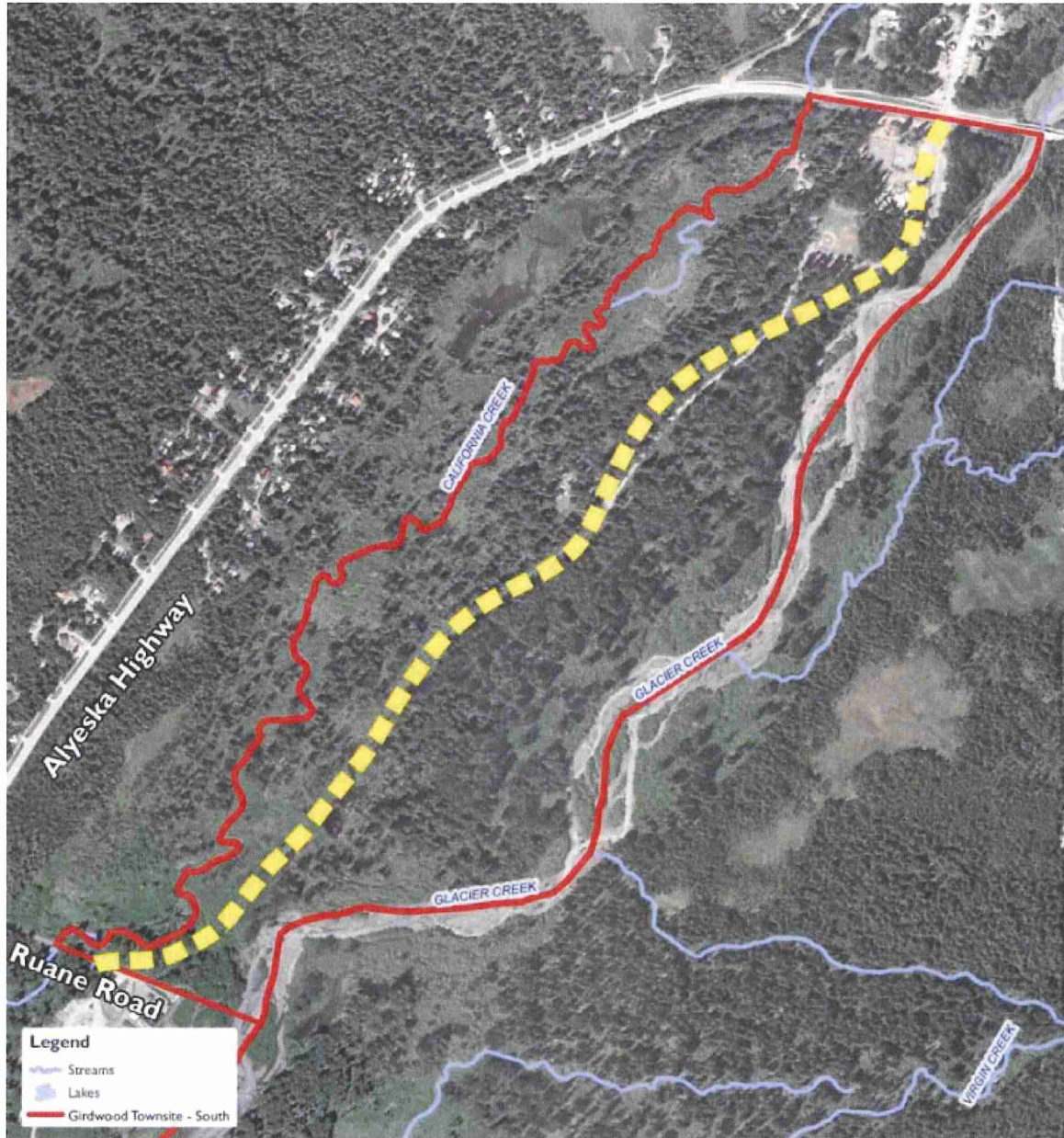
The Girdwood Area Plan (GAP) specifically calls for the connection of the collector to Ruane Road. The GAP, and OS&HP recommend different collector road systems in the area of the South Townsite. As the most recently adopted plan, the CAT is viewed as the adopted plan; however, its recommendations were never incorporated into the OS&HP.

The Girdwood South Townsite Master Plan recommends a Collector street beginning at the intersection of Alyeska Highway and Egloff Drive extending in a southerly direction along the Karolius Drive alignment as shown in the CAT Plan. However, instead of turning southwest and connecting to Alyeska Highway near the platted Juniper Drive connection, the plan recommends extending it southward to connect with Ruane Road (this connection most closely resembles the 1995 GAP). The plan also recommends dropping the connection from Glacier Creek Drive across California Creek to connect with Alyeska Highway west of Crow Creek Road.

Because the southern connection will occur in later phases, and because the cost implications associated with a Ruane Road connection versus a Juniper Drive Connection to the Alyeska Highway are not yet known, until a decision is made for the location of the southern connection of the collector road to Alyeska Highway, the platted ROW at Juniper Drive should be retained.

There are challenges in building a new collector road with the proposed alignment, as the extension of Karolius Drive south to Ruane Road would have to cross Class A wetlands. The unavoidable disturbance of wetlands would trigger the need for an extensive permitting process. Permits would be required from the Municipality, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the US Army Corps of Engineers, which would add significantly to preconstruction costs; mitigation measures would also add to the expense of construction. This route has, however been disturbed in the past to install the new sewer main and a new alignment would likely follow a similar route. A Juniper Drive connection to the Alyeska Highway faces similar environmental constraints, but would require a new road and bridge across California Creek and through wetlands not previously disturbed.

**Map 6.2, Girdwood South Townsite Proposed Collector Road (GAP and CAT plans)**



Note that the collector alignment identified in both the CAT and GAP plans is closely aligned with that proposed in the 2014 Amendment.



## **Recommended Plan Changes/Amendments**

### **Official Streets and Highway Plan**

Maintain the Juniper Drive collector link for the for the south connection to the Alyeska Highway, but add the direct link from the South end of the HLB lands to Ruane Road (near AWWU Facilities) as an alternate. This connection may not be needed for many years, but when it is required, the two alternatives can be compared to identify the best route.

### **Girdwood Streets and Drainage Improvements Project (2008-2009)**

To construct the public improvements recommended by the CAT Plan, in 2004 the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) was granted \$10,600,000 in Federal funds to construct street and drainage improvement projects that facilitate and support economic development within the Girdwood community. Subsequently, ADOT&PF and the Municipality entered into a Transfer of Responsibility Agreement that permits the Municipality to administer \$4,500,000 of the \$10,600,000 grant appropriation for the design and construction of the Girdwood Streets and Drainage Improvements project.

Due to funding limitations, ADOT&PF and the Municipality solicited input from the Girdwood community through the Girdwood Board of Supervisors (GBOS) to prioritize potential construction projects. To meet the goals and objectives of the Girdwood Streets and Drainage Improvements project, the GBOS and Girdwood community prioritized potential projects based on the findings and recommendations of the CAT Plan. Three roadway segments of the New Girdwood Townsite were identified as the highest priorities: Hightower Road, Lindblad Avenue, and Holmgren Place.

The project, named Girdwood Streets and Drainage Improvements (PM&E Project No. 03-26, Highway Project No. HDP-0001 (307)/5705), was completed in 2013.

The GBOS also identified the upgrade of Girdwood Place as a priority project for the community. It was completed as a separate project sponsored jointly by the Municipality of Anchorage People Mover and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). This project provides a central location for Girdwood commuters to park their vehicles and board a shuttle for Anchorage. The project includes not only the upgrading of Girdwood Place, but also 42 on-street parking spaces, a bus turnout and a surface parking lot containing 25 spaces. The project, named the Girdwood Transportation Center Park & Ride (PM&E Project No. 06-018, FTA Project No. AK-03-0076), was completed in 2008.

## Alternative Modes of Transportation

A key factor in the success of any community core area is the ability to minimize the intrusion of automobiles without sacrificing convenient access to commercial activity. Lacking access by modes of transportation in addition to vehicles, more area must be dedicated to parking than the community would like to see in order to support new commercial and residential uses. In Girdwood, a major north-south trail spine will provide some essential connections, but other modes of public transit are in their infancy or not yet fundable. The Girdwood South Townsite Master Plan recommends a continuing effort to examine the feasibility of multi-modal transit facilities to support commuter traffic into Anchorage and attract tourist traffic traveling between Anchorage and the cruise ship ports of Seward and Whittier.

## Pedestrian Connections

Heavy snow levels in winter and the generally disconnected location of existing civic and commercial destinations in Girdwood have combined in the past to frustrate efforts to create a pedestrian network in the center of town. Future development in both the North and South Townsites, however, will be guided by new urban design guidelines that encourage more attention to pedestrian connections. Improved sidewalks were recognized in the CAT Plan as essential components of the



circulation system. The plan insisted that the commercial area of the South Townsite have a complete network of sidewalks to provide access to retail establishments, connections to other sectors of town, access to parking, and connection to nearby trails.

This master plan endorses conformity with the CAT Plan guidelines and encourages sheltered sidewalks and other streetscape amenities in the South Townsite similar to those that will be constructed in the North Townsite in conjunction with the Girdwood Streets and Drainage Improvements Project. The streetscape improvements that are being detailed in that project will hopefully result in a more pedestrian-friendly environment in the Town Square area, one that will provide a good model for subsequent new development in the South Townsite.

## Trails

The 1996 Areawide Trails Plan is the primary document guiding the development of the Municipality of Anchorage's trail system. It is intended to assist local and state agencies, organizations, and private citizens in establishing trail facilities as part of an overall transportation system. Within the Girdwood South Townsite Master Plan study area, the Area-wide Trails Plan recognized the most significant trail in the study area, the Iditarod National Historic Trail.

The 1997 Girdwood-Iditarod Trail Route Study evaluated possible routes for a commemorative trail linking the Turnagain Arm bike trail and the New Girdwood Townsite to the Crow Pass-Iditarod trailhead. The restoration of this historic trail was proposed, in part, to enhance pedestrian opportunities in the valley.



In the 1997 route study, two easements were identified for an improved Iditarod National historic trail. The easternmost easement parallels the bank of Glacier Creek. The second alternative easement generally follows the road right-of-way for Karolius and Cottonwood Drives through the center of the study area, but this route is not the one preferred by the community. The Girdwood Trails Committee prefers the alignment near Glacier Creek.

An asset to the community, the current trail is marked and sees regular use. For the most part, the trail runs in the Glacier Creek riverbed and on the creek banks. There is an old section of the trail that runs along the length of the platted road (Karolius Drive) and into the Girdwood Townsite. South of the study area; the trail connects the Virgin Creek, Wagon and Alyeska Basin trail systems. It provides a pedestrian and recreational connection to the Girdwood North Townsite and Town Square Park. Undedicated spur trails heading east from the Iditarod Trail end at informal camp spots and overlooks along Glacier Creek; trails heading west generally end at Karolius Drive.

Previous plans have called for a pedestrian tunnel under the Alyeska Highway between California Creek and Glacier Creek, perhaps aligning with Girdwood Place on the north side. This has been investigated further and due to grading challenges for the Alyeska Highway it appears to be infeasible. This plan accepts the existing pedestrian link adjacent to Glacier Creek, passing under the Alyeska Highway as the principal pedestrian link from north to south. In future planning, this link should be improved and reinforced.

There are a number of other, informal trails that could continue to serve as pedestrian circulation paths. The CAT Plan recognized their importance: “Trails will play a unique dual role in Girdwood Valley in the future. A well-developed trail system will support recreation-based tourism. At the same time, trails should support a growing volume of utilitarian travel, commuting to and from school/work or shopping by bike, skiing or walking.” Trail connections between pods of development, between different trails, and between areas of the valley must be implemented (CAT pages 31-34). Consistent with the CAT Plan, this master plan recommends that site plans for proposed residential development in the South Townsite extend path connections among buildings as they are phased in and incorporate a north-south greenbelt spine using the existing utility easement for the sewer line; a greenbelt trail in this location would connect with both the Iditarod Trail and southern portions of the study area.

### **The Girdwood Shuttle**

“Shuttle bus service should be instituted between the two existing resort base areas, any future resort base areas, the Girdwood commercial areas, and a prospective rail service station (when service is offered), to help alleviate some of the summer and winter peak-period traffic congestion. It would also give residents and visitors alike an opportunity to make short trips within the community without the use of a car, particularly during inclement weather.” (1995 Girdwood Area Plan, page 87.)

As recommended by the Girdwood Area Plan, Alyeska Resort is now partnering with the Municipality of Anchorage Public Transportation Office to support the Glacier Valley Stagecoach, providing local transportation service within Girdwood. Glacier Valley Stagecoach commenced year-round operations in the fall of 2007, with a one-hour loop servicing 19 Girdwood area locations and Alyeska Resort. To increase reliability and minimize wait times, shuttle vehicles follow the same route approximately 30 minutes apart during peak times.

### **Rail Service**

“The Girdwood Rail Feasibility Assessment was performed as part of the Girdwood Community Impact Study, a component of the comprehensive planning effort for the Girdwood Valley, including revision of the 1987 Turnagain Arm Comprehensive Plan. The proposed rail service would operate from the Alaska Railroad depot on First Avenue in Anchorage to a station location in Girdwood near Alyeska Highway, with intermediate stops at the Dimond Center and in the vicinity of Huffman Road and Old Seward Highway. One or two Rail Diesel Cars (RDCs), depending on the season, would provide service. The study concluded that sizable government support would be required in the near term; however, growth over the twenty-year planning period would improve financial feasibility.” (2001 Girdwood Commercial Areas and Transportation Master Plan, Appendix A, page 1.)



Some of the identified possible routes for a rail spur go through or near the Girdwood South Townsite study area, but these were not deemed to be the most viable routes. At the time the CAT Plan was adopted by the Anchorage Assembly, the Girdwood community was not supportive of a rail spur into the valley.

## **Utilities**

Local utility companies report that their existing facilities will be adequate to serve the amount of development envisioned in the South Townsite. Water and sewer main lines have already been installed through the area, and service lines can be extended in phases as development occurs. Realignment of existing water and sewer lines probably would not be necessary, although extensions of these lines would be needed to serve specific buildings. Electrical service is also currently available to the area. Chugach Electric has recently completed a second, alternate feeder line into the Girdwood Valley from south to north through the entire South Townsite.

## **Electrical Service**

Chugach Electric Association (Chugach) serves the community of Girdwood via a 24.9 kV (kilovolt) distribution system that extends from its Girdwood Substation, located adjacent to the Alyeska Highway in the Old Girdwood Townsite subdivision. Two main 24.9 kV feeder circuits, one an overhead line routed along the Alyeska Highway and the other an underground line paralleling Glacier Creek, provide service to an equal proportion of Chugach's customer load in the Girdwood area.

Both single- and three-phase power are available to the proposed Girdwood South Townsite development, via an underground three-phase main feeder circuit power line (24.9 kV). This power line has capacity to serve the type of electrical loads anticipated for the South Townsite development. It is a looped circuit that can be switched to isolate a faulted line segment and restore power from both ends.

Chugach's long-term objectives for the Girdwood Substation include expanding capabilities to accommodate a second power transformer and improving the 115 kV transmission switching flexibility to increase transmission supply availability.

## **Stormwater Drainage System**

Girdwood is located in a coastal rainforest zone and receives more than seventy inches of rain annually. The maritime climate, intensified by cold winter temperatures and heavy snowfall, puts significant strain on the drainage system. During precipitation events in late fall and winter, drainage problems are often exaggerated by frozen culverts and storms in which snowfall warms to rain. Compounding the problem, Girdwood has had a patchwork development history, and much of its development has happened without adequate



governmental oversight of road, utility, housing, and drainage construction and design. As limited land has become increasingly valuable, development densities have increased. As the pressure mounts to open more land, development has expanded into less suitable and often steep terrain, putting additional strain on the drainage system.

In response to existing drainage problems and the need to design more effective drainage systems, the Municipality of Anchorage Project Management and Engineering Department (PM&E) has completed a draft Girdwood Drainage Study, dated November 2007. The study locates existing problem areas and their causes and recommends solutions to prevent similar drainage issues in future development areas.

## **Water and Sewer**

The Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU) constructed the Girdwood wastewater system in 1977 and 1978. Since then, the system has been expanded to accommodate new development and planned growth. The wastewater treatment facility is located at the south end of the study area on Ruane Road, east of Alyeska Highway. The Girdwood sewage collection system serves an area from the Alyeska Hotel south to the Seward Highway and provides service to most of the residents in the Girdwood Valley. The collection area covers the base of the ski resort, the Alyeska basin, the Alyeska subdivision, the New Girdwood Townsite, the school area, and the old townsite and commercial area at the Seward Highway. The system also provides service along Alyeska Highway, from Monarch Mine Road to Crow Creek Road. Commercial development in the area served by AWWU includes the Alyeska Resort, commercial areas of the Girdwood Townsite, and the intersection of Alyeska Highway and Seward Highway.

In 1991, the Anchorage Water and Waste Water Utility assumed operational responsibility of the three existing community water systems and several individually developed wells in the Girdwood Valley. Improvements to the water system were made in 1991 and 1992 to replace undersized pipe and integrate the existing distribution system with two wells and a reservoir that was originally developed by the Seibu Corporation. The distribution system was expanded in 2004 to service the fire station, the New Girdwood Townsite and the school.

AWWU currently provides water service to the area of Girdwood east of Glacier Creek, as well as the New Girdwood Townsite. The utility's two wells are located just north of the Girdwood airstrip with capacities of 1,000 and 600 gallons per minute.

With the 1991 improvements AWWU now maintains the one-million-gallon reservoir north of Alyeska Resort. The reservoir is located at 400 feet of elevation, permitting gravity flow into the existing water system. However, because Alyeska Resort is located between the water supply wells and the reservoir, the reservoir may not be considered as a detention tank for disinfection purposes.

Since the time this plan was originally approved and the current effort to update and amend the plan, an AWWU project was completed to extend the water transmission main to the west side of Glacier Creek and then across Glacier Creek to complete a looped system (Phase II-B of the 1994 Anchorage Water Master Plan).

Utilities currently within the Egloff Drive right-of-way include the recently constructed 16-inch AWWU water transmission main that runs approximately 600 feet south of the Alyeska Highway and services the fire station and the new library/community center. AWWU also has a sewer main in the existing Egloff Drive/Karolius Drive right-of-way that runs from the Alyeska Highway south to the Ruane Road treatment facility. A sewer main services lots along the Alyeska Highway and connects from the west into the main on Karolius Drive through the platted Juniper Road right-of-way.

Girdwood's relatively new system has adequate capacity for the next twenty years. Wastewater system expansion will be driven by community growth such as the Crow Creek Neighborhood development, Winner Creek resort expansion, and future additional development along Alyeska Highway.

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## 7. EVOLUTION OF THE PLAN

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This section describes the alternatives considered for land uses in the South Townsite. It traces the evolution of the plan from its earliest sketches to its current, more detailed draft.

### Initial Sketches: Road Pattern Options

The first conceptual sketches of the South Townsite plan were developed at the three-day community workshop in November 2007. Over the first two days of the workshops, different aspects of the South Townsite development were discussed. Workshop participants generated a list of desired uses in the area that included commercial services, park and recreation space, room for public facilities, and some residential development. (See Appendix A for workshop notes.) Environmental conditions in the study area as well as the regulatory context were discussed in order to understand the extent to which they would present constraints to development and to marry the desired land uses with the availability of developable land. During these discussions, cost and ease of development were constant considerations.

It quickly became apparent to all participants that the area's road layout would be one of the most influential determinants affecting the pattern and sequence of South Townsite development. Understanding the road layout options became one of the workshop's highest priorities. Table 7.1 outlines the various road pattern options discussed and lists some of the advantages and disadvantages of each.

In preparation for the final day of the community workshop, the consulting team produced site plan sketches to illustrate two distinct options for the arrangement of land uses and roads. These options were intended demonstrate the influence that the road layout would have on the pattern of development. Although many different options for a secondary road access were considered, the two that were most preferred by the community were illustrated. These became known as "Option 1: Road to Ruane" and "Option 2: Looped Ladder." These two options are shown in Figure 7.1 "Option 1" and "Option 2" from the November, 2007 Girdwood Community Workshops.

Of the two options, most participants preferred the road layout proposed in Option 2, the "Looped Ladder." This preference recognized that the other option—construction of a road through the entire area connecting to Ruane—would have to happen in an initial phase of development in order to overcome code limitations on the maximum length of a cul-de-sac road. Not only would this alignment be technically difficult, but it would also incur prohibitive up-front costs. In contrast, the "looped ladder" option allows for slower incremental development of the area, as more affordable phases of infrastructure development could be undertaken in step with community needs and increased demand.

Further southward in the site, flood hazards and wetlands are more severe constraints, leaving a much narrower developable area from east to west. As a result, the continuation of two north south roads is less advisable, as it would incur higher costs and greater environmental impacts, but achieve fewer development benefits. To account for this, it was suggested that after the third or fourth “loop,” the concept be modified to show a single road running southward to connect to Ruane Road (assumed to be in a much later phase). With this modification, “Option 2: Looped Ladder” was identified as the community’s preference. It should be noted that, although this option was judged more realistic than the Ruane Road connection, a number of people remained concerned about the impacts of a second road off Alyeska Highway at Girdwood Place.

**Figure 7.1, “Option 1” from Community Workshops**

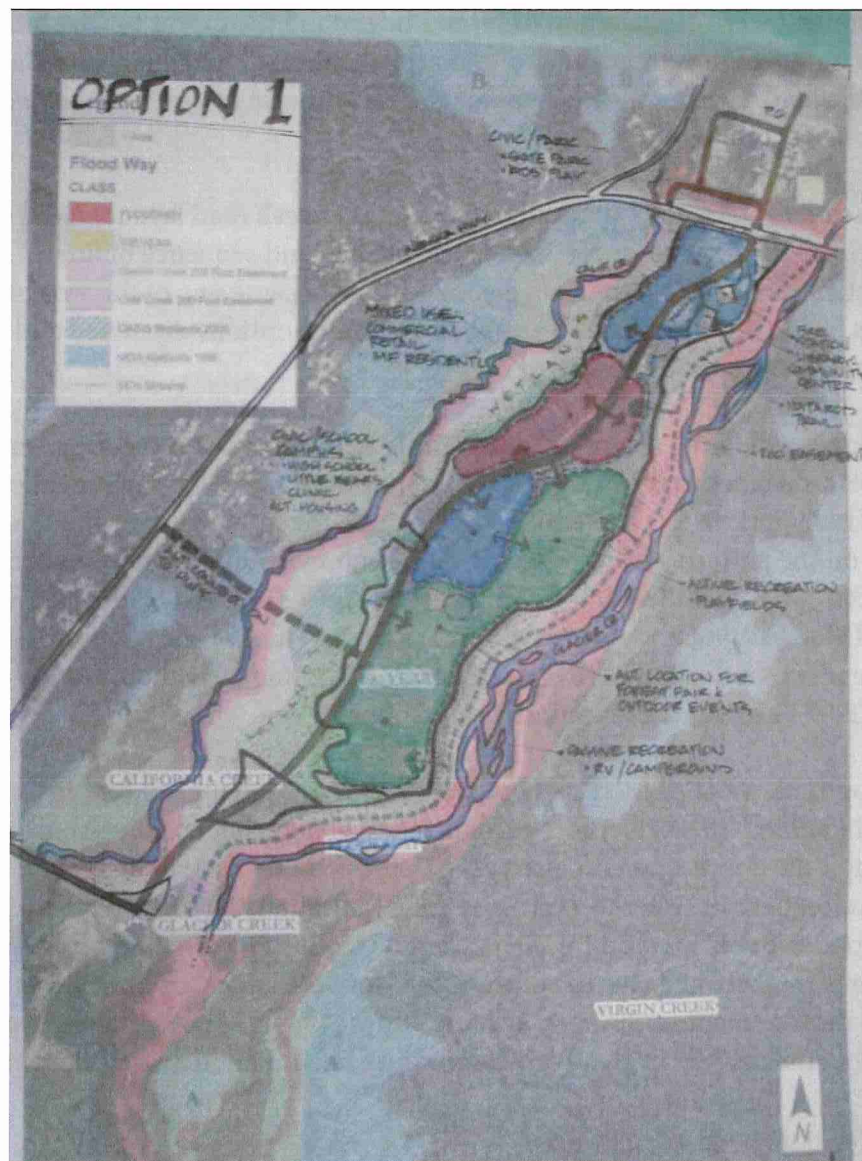
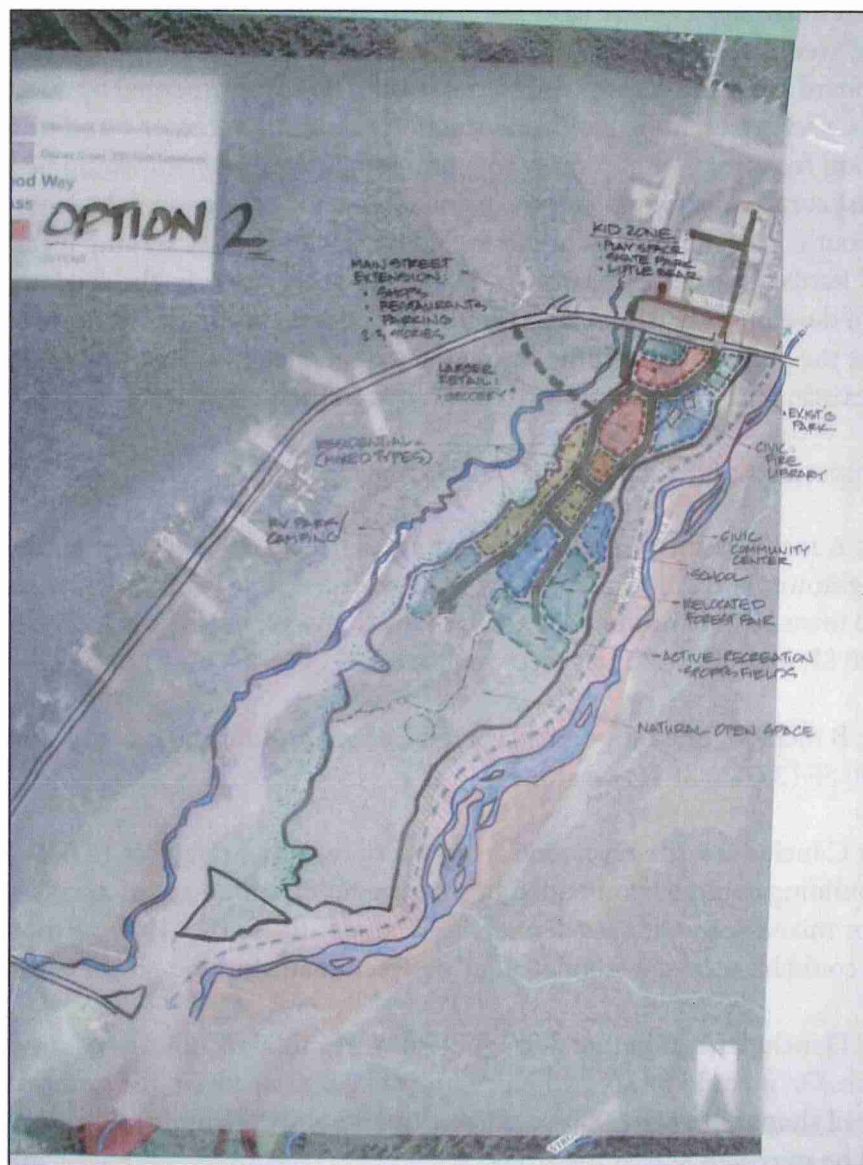




Figure 7.2, “Option 2” from Community Workshops



## Development Alternatives

After the November community workshops, three alternative ideas were developed based on “Option 2,” the preferred option. These three alternatives focused on land uses and a development pattern for the northern end of the study area. The objective of these studies was not to propose a particular development scenario, but rather to test the capacity of the study area to accommodate different land use patterns, uses and densities in an effort to elicit community reactions and preferences. Each of the alternatives is described below.

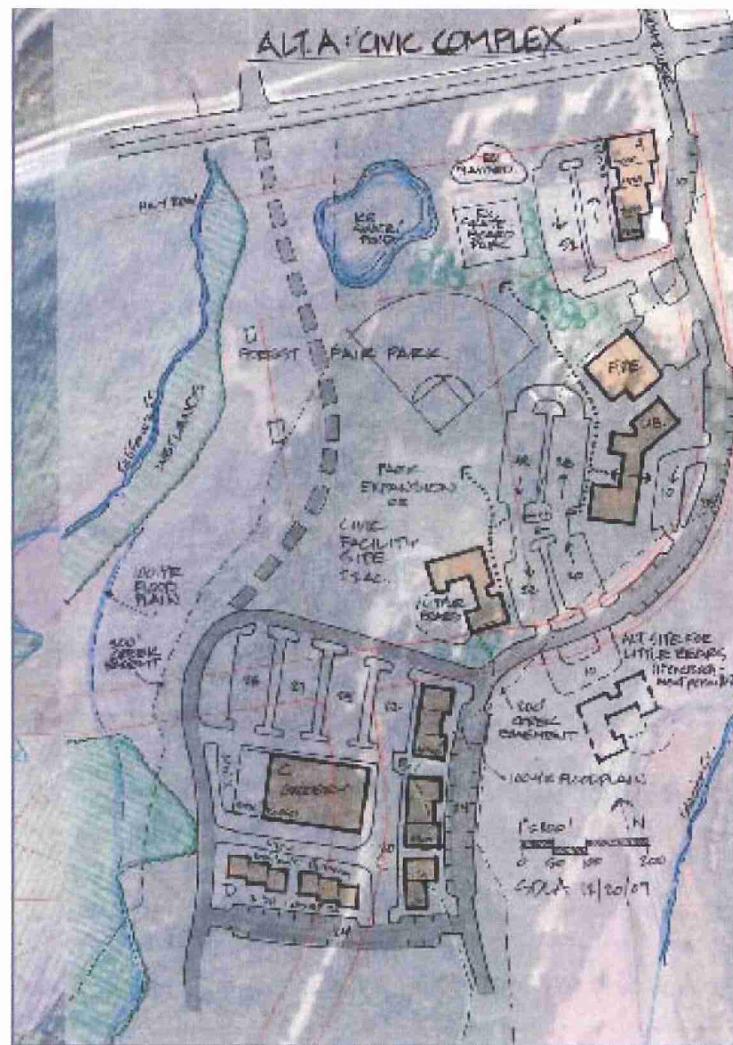
## **Alternative A - Civic Complex**

Alternative A illustrates a future land-use pattern that would concentrate civic uses in a campus-like area at the northernmost end of the study area. Existing uses such as the ball field, skateboard park, fire station and library would be complemented by additional public facilities—such as a school, childcare center or community center—and improved park and recreation facilities. A small space for commercial development would be reserved in the northeast corner of the area, but the primary area for commercial development would be further south. Possible tenants might include small businesses serving local needs (e.g., dry cleaner, hardware store, bookstore) and a larger grocery store. The road accessing this phase of development would loop around the outside perimeter of the area in order to maximize the pedestrian-friendly campus layout and feeling. This alternative had little impact on existing facilities, all of which remained in their current locations.

Specific components of the Alternative A sketch plan included:

- Block A includes small mixed-use commercial/retail development at the corner of Hightower and Alyeska Highway to provide a visible landmark and connection to the town center commercial north of the highway; mostly two-story – approx. 19,000 SF, min. 58 parking spaces required
- Block B includes one-story ancillary retail shops around the grocery store, approx. 13,000 SF (26,000 SF if two stories)
- Block C includes a site reserved for a grocery (or other retail) of 15,000-20,000 SF. The building could be embedded in a perimeter development of ancillary shops (B) and/or mixed-uses with residential on the upper floors (D). Parking for residential units could be accessed from an alley between them and the grocery store
- Block D includes residential development with a total of 12 units of about 1,000 sq. ft. each. Or, it could be six two-story units of 2,000 sq. ft. Or, the ground floor could be retail shops with six 1,000-sq. ft. apartments above. This development pattern could be mirrored across the street
- Total commercial space in this alternative is 37,550 SF – 65,100 SF with two-story structures. This is the lowest of the three alternatives
- Hightower is routed on the east side of the fire station and library
- A connection to Girdwood Place is shown in a dashed line
- All parking shown can be utilized during the Forest Fair and shared with multiple recreational and commercial uses.

Figure 7.3, Alternate A, Civic Complex from Community Workshops



- Wetlands mapped along California Creek are not disturbed
- The existing library is shown in approximate location; parking has been reconfigured. Parking requirement for library is unknown.
- No buildings in this alternative encroach into the 200-foot creek easements; a portion of the Hightower extension encroaches, as does the connection at Girdwood Place
- The existing library is shown in approximate location; parking has been reconfigured. Parking requirement for library is unknown.

- Two alternative sites are shown for the relocation of Little Bears. The one to the west across the street from the library could share a 1- $\frac{3}{4}$  -acre site with a future health clinic (or other civic use). The alternative site south of the library is in the 100-year floodplain, as are the existing buildings
- The civic facility site, about 2 acres, could be shared with the daycare center and could accommodate a health clinic, a new Glacier City Hall, or a small community center
- The sewer line would have to be relocated through the grocery store block; elsewhere, it can remain in its existing platted easement

#### **Summary of Pros, Alt. A**

- Important community assets can remain where they are currently
- California Creek Park is improved and expanded. Relocated ball field could be utilized as a venue during the fair
- View of the pond from the highway could be attractive to visitors as they enter town
- Pedestrian circulation within the civic/park complex is not interrupted by roadways (unless a second connection to Alyeska Highway is required)
- The grocery store site is reasonably visible from the highway
- Alternative A is easy to build out in phases

#### **Summary of Cons, Alt. A**

- The ice-skating pond is not convenient to parking (unless the Girdwood Place connection is included)
- The civic facility site may not be big enough
- The ball field occupies prime developable land near the highway

The main disadvantage of this alternative is the limited amount of commercial space shown. In part, this limitation is dictated by the placement of the road, which would leave room for development (of any kind) only on the west side of the street. Further, much of the commercial space identified in this concept would be comparatively far from the highway, which could diminish its value to commercial developers and potential tenants.

Because the Girdwood Area Plan and existing zoning have confined commercial development to a handful of nodes in the valley, this master plan suggests that it is generally to the community's advantage to reserve as much space for commercial uses as possible in the specific areas where it is allowed. Otherwise, Girdwood's local economy will be limited in its ability to grow. As commercial land becomes scarcer, land values will likely increase to a point that may prohibit entrepreneurs from starting new businesses in Girdwood, or there may be no more land available at all for commercial development.

A secondary economic concern is that municipalities often rely on commercial development to pay for related infrastructure development, such as utility line extensions, road construction, flood control and drainage systems, and required platting and surveying services. Without a certain level of commercial or residential development to help defray the costs of infrastructure, the burden of the initial phases of development would fall to the entities developing civic facilities; these typically operate with smaller budgets, need to acquire land at below-market rates, and rely on grants and government subsidies to underwrite development.

A possible difficulty with this alternative is that the portion of the new Hightower extension around the east side of the library would have to be constructed within the 200-foot easement along Glacier Creek. In addition, a proposed secondary access road connecting to Girdwood Place at Alyeska Highway would have to encroach into the 200-foot easement of California Creek. Townsite Committee members found a lot to like in Alternative A, as it changed very little about the existing development. However, some participants saw the lack of commercial potential as a significant disadvantage.



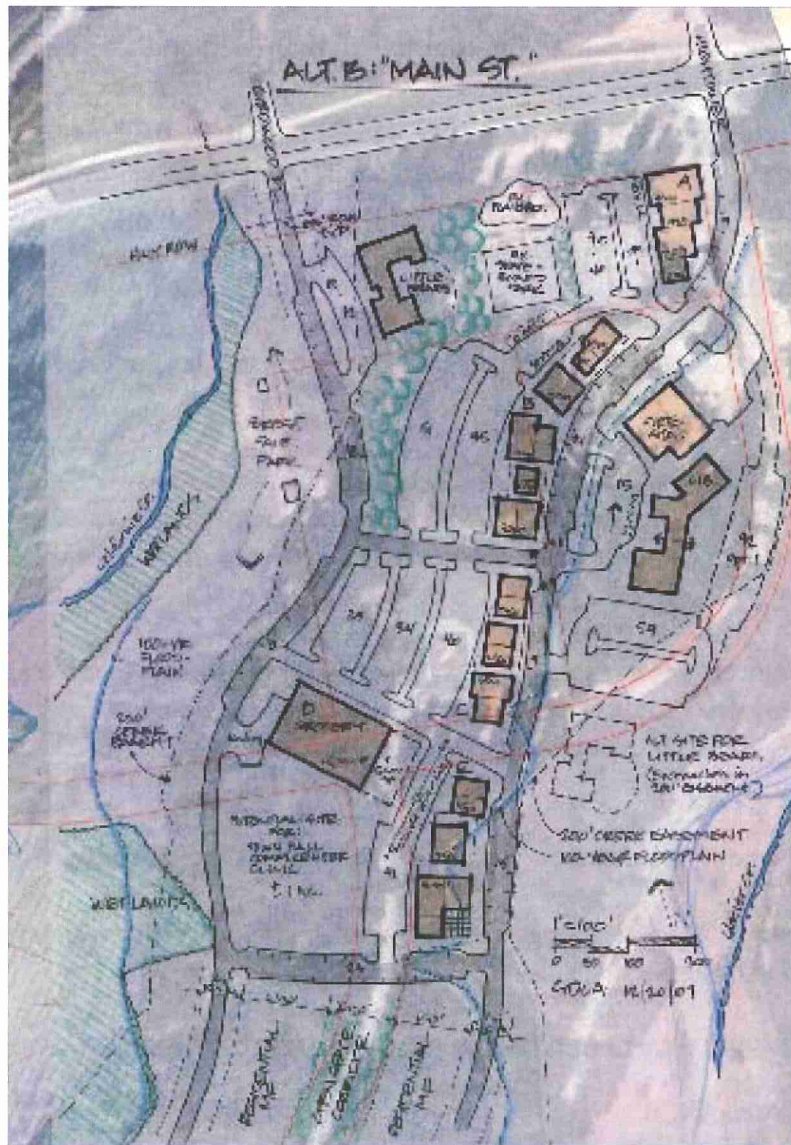
## **Alternative B - Main Street Mixed Use**

Alternative B depicts a mix of civic, open space, commercial and residential uses arranged along a new “Main Street”. Rather than placing the extension of Hightower (Egloff) at the perimeter of development, this alternative brings the road into the center of the development area in order to provide shops with good visibility and access to both foot and vehicle traffic and to stimulate the level of commercial activity. Consistent with Girdwood’s existing small-town character, the buildings along the new main street would be similar in scale to the existing buildings in the New Girdwood Townsite. This alternative, like Alternative A, would retain the existing civic uses—such as the fire station, kids’ playground, skateboard park and library—and intermix additional commercial, civic and residential uses, all connected by a network of pedestrian pathways and amenities. The primary objective of this development pattern is the creation of a lively, economically vibrant mixed-use core area.

Specific components of the Alternative B sketch plan:

- Block A is a small mixed-use commercial/retail development at the corner of Hightower and Alyeska Hwy—same as in Alternative A
- Blocks B, C, and E are one, and two-story retail shops and commercial spaces, with storefronts relating to Hightower and a new small-town streetscape
- Block D is a site reserved for a grocery store (or other retail) of 15,000-20,000 SF
- Total commercial space in this alternative is 56,700 SF to 103,400 SF with two-story structures. This is the highest of the three alternatives
- Egloff Drive is re-routed on the west side of the fire station and library. An optional driveway access to additional parking on the east side of the library is shown in a dashed line
- A connection to Girdwood Place is necessary for uncongested access to new commercial uses
- All parking shown can be shared with multiple recreational and commercial uses
- Wetlands mapped along California Creek are not disturbed
- No buildings in this alternative encroach into the 200-foot creek easements; a portion of the Egloff Drive extension encroaches, as does the connection at Girdwood Place

Figure 7.4, Alternate B, "Main Street" (From Community Workshops)



- The existing library is shown in approximate location; parking has been reconfigured, parking requirement for library is unknown
- Two alternative sites are shown for the relocation of Little Bears. The one at the northwest corner of the site, by Girdwood Place, relates to other facilities for kids. The alternative site south of the library is in the 100-year floodplain, but is not separated from the library by Egloff Drive
- The civic facility site, about an acre, is shown south of the grocery

- The sewer line would have to be relocated through the grocery store block; elsewhere, it can remain in its existing platted easement. South of the grocery store, the existing sewer alignment can become an open space corridor between blocks of multi-family housing

The primary disadvantage of this alternative was thought to be the amount of commercial development and associated parking it illustrated. Members of the Townsite Subcommittee were concerned that the ratio of commercial to other types of uses was too high and that too much open space would be sacrificed for retail and office space. Another disadvantage was the distance between Alyeska Highway and the site proposed for a grocery store or other retail anchor. Reviewers also pointed out that certain important existing uses—such as the ball field—would have to be relocated to sites further south in the study area.

There were also potential legal and zoning constraints on the west edge of the proposed secondary access road. The road as shown crosses land zoned for park uses, which may not allow intrusion by a road, and the north end near the highway falls within the 200-foot easement of California Creek.

Despite these concerns, Alternative B was judged to be the most workable alternative. Committee members asked that this option be modified to reduce the amount of commercial space and to include more civic uses in the mix.

#### **Summary of Pros, Alt. B**

- Important community assets can remain where they are currently
- Pedestrian circulation is an active commercial, main-street experience (not a park-land trail experience)
- Alternative B is easy to build out in phases

#### **Summary of Cons, Alt. B**

- California Creek Park does not benefit measurably from this scheme, and would probably be moved south in a later phase
- Civic facility site may not be big enough
- Grocery store site does not have great visibility from the highway
- Large expanse of parking lots to support this much commercial will have negative consequences for natural landscape (could be built in phases)
- Scheme may not leave adequate room for stormwater management

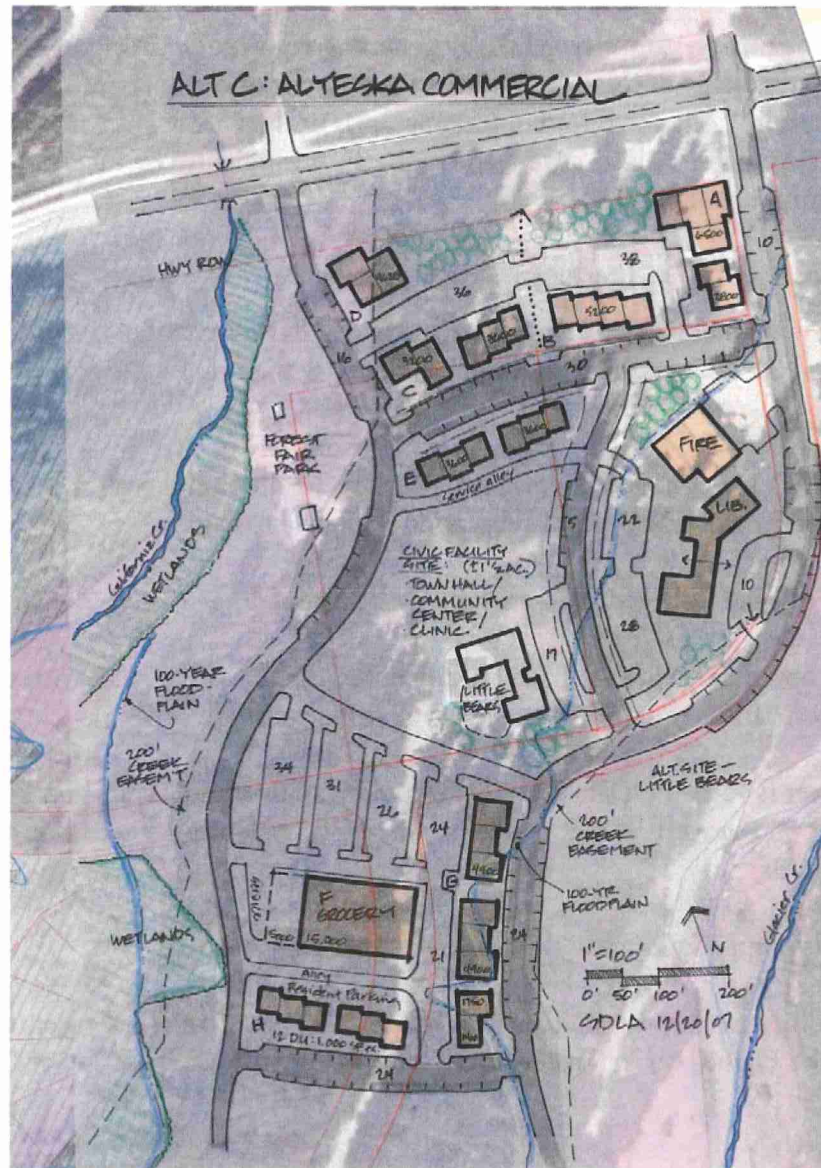
### **Alternative C - Alyeska Commercial**

Alternative C maximizes commercial development along a cross-street parallel to Alyeska Highway. One advantage of this alternative is the amount of commercial space it provides in the area generally designated for commercial uses in the Girdwood Area Plan. With better access and greater visibility from the highway, it might also be the option most attractive to commercial developers.

Specific components of the Alternative C sketch plan:

- Block A is a small mixed-use commercial/retail development at the corner of Hightower and Alyeska Highway – somewhat smaller than in the other two alternatives because of the new cross-street
- Blocks B, C, D and E are one and two-story retail shops and commercial spaces, with storefronts on both sides relating to the new cross-street
- Block F is a site reserved for a grocery (or other retail) of 15,000-20,000 SF
- Total commercial space in this alternative: 61,125 SF to 87,100 SF with two-story structures. This is the middle range of the three alternatives
- Hightower is routed on the east side of the fire station and library; parking for the library is on the west side, accessed by a new north-south street between the connector roads
- Wetlands mapped along California Creek are not disturbed
- No buildings in this alternative encroach into the 200-foot creek easements; a portion of the Hightower extension encroaches, as does the connection at Girdwood Place
- Little Bears could also be located south of the library, but it would be separated from the library by Hightower and would be in the 100-year floodplain
- Including the area shown on the drawing for Little Bears, the civic facility site could total about 2 acres
- This scheme, as drawn, would require relocation of a longer portion of the existing sewer line

Figure 7.4, Alternate B, "Main Street" (From Community Workshops)



### Summary of Pros, Alt. C

- Alternative C reinforces the concentration of civic uses in the core area already initiated by the library and the fire station
- Pedestrian circulation is an active commercial, main-street experience (not a park-land trail experience)
- Alternative C is easy to build out in phases



- This alternative needs less commercial development to make a successful streetscape.
- May function as a better transition across the highway to the North Townsite.

### **Summary of Cons, Alt. C**

- This alternative is highly dependent on traffic calming of the highway and achievement of safe pedestrian crossings at both proposed intersections.
- Important community assets must be relocated.
- The grocery store site is less visible from the highway.
- California Creek Park does not benefit and would be impacted by the Girdwood Place connector. It would probably have to be moved south.
- A large expanse of parking is required to support this much commercial (could be built in phases).
- Scheme may not leave adequate room for stormwater management.

The disadvantages of Alternative C outweighed any advantages it may have had for the viability of commercial development. In general, community participants rejected the idea of commercial activity fronting on Alyeska Highway and did not want to project that image at the community's entry. Additionally, there were legal and zoning constraints because the land along Alyeska Highway is zoned as parkland, and a municipal-wide vote to remove the park dedication would be required to rezone the area for commercial development. Finally, important existing uses – the kid's playground, skateboard park, and Glacier City Hall - would be forced to move in an early phase of development. For these very compelling reasons, Alternative C was eliminated from further consideration.

### **Preferred Alternative**

Although a few people preferred the perimeter road layout shown in Alternative A, the main street in Alternative B was the preference of a majority of the group, who thought that it would provide a more diverse mix of uses and a more intensely active core area in the South Townsite. In subsequent discussions with the Townsite Subcommittee, a hybrid between Alternative A "Civic Complex" and Alternative B "Main Street" emerged as the clear preference. The consulting team was asked to do a revised drawing to illustrate the best elements from each alternative, combining the main street roadway concept with a more balanced mix of existing and future civic and commercial uses.

In preparing the 2014 plan amendment, the South Townsite Sub-Committee of the Girdwood Land Use Committee has requested that the preferred alternative is Alternative A, the Civic Complex. This is based on a local understanding that the South Townsite is already being developed as a Girdwood Civic Center and the ability of attracting commercial activity to the area is limited.

## **2014 Plan Amendment**

The South Girdwood Area Plan was approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission in May of 2009. That approval included a number of conditions that have never been incorporated into the plan. Additionally, members of the community have felt strongly that the alignment of Egloff Drive identified in the plan did not match the desired alignment of the roadway expressed by Girdwood Residents during the planning process. Construction of Egloff Drive is now in the planning stages and one focus of the plan revision is to incorporate the desired alignment into the Girdwood South Townsite Area Plan. Revisions to this plan are focused to include:

- Incorporation of conditions attached to the Planning and Zoning Approval
- Update of sections of the plan that have documented changes (i.e. construction of new Chugach Electric line, Anchorage Water and Wastewater Improvements, and Replat of the “Squirrel Cages” in the South Townsite Area
- Update of graphics to reflect current conditions
- Corrections to errors made in the approved South Girdwood Area Plan that have not been picked up previously (erroneous boundaries for Girdwood Park)
- Change in the location of Egloff Drive to reflect the community desired location and drop the “Main Street” treatment of the street. Many of the assumptions that supported the “Main Street” concept are not well supported. Rather Egloff Drive should be treated as a “Collector Road” for the South Townsite Area
- No changes are proposed to the Girdwood South Townsite Area Plan Appendices as part of this amendment

**Table 7.1 Road Options Considered**

OPTION	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	How to do it
Option #1 Loop Road	Loop road from Hightower (Egloff) back to Girdwood Place	Encourages unification of North-South Townsite; good access to developable land; ability to effectively “phase” road project; encourage traffic calming measures on Alyeska Highway	200-foot easement; need to move California Creek Park/land swap between P&R and HLB; wetland impact	Municipality obtains permission from DNR to build road within easement; partial funding available to Library area.
Option #2 Extension to Ruane Road	Extend Hightower (Egloff Drive & Karolius Drive) south to Ruane Road	Access to entire property for multitude of uses; can be second phase of Loop Road; stays out of 200-foot easement corridors and alternative with least impact on wetlands; provides secondary access out of Valley if there is an issue with the highway	Cuts entire area in half; costly to develop in-full; may not make best use of limited developable area	Reserve right-of-way; partial funding available
Option #3 Long Cul-De-Sac	Get a variance for longer cul-de-sac	May be a temporary solution until need for secondary access is triggered by Fire Code.	Would not be accepted by the Municipality as a long-term solution, since it violates existing planning code.	Attain Municipal permission for temporary cul-de-sac; partial funding available to build to Library area.
Option #4 Loop Ladder	Series of road loops, each loop added as need arises	Similar to Option #1; allows for phased access further south, as needed to respond to development pressures; affordable if it is staged to correspond with development that can cover all or some of the costs	Doesn't seem to be a need for loops to continue into the open space area	Similar to Option #1
Option #5 Big Loop	Connect elsewhere on the Alyeska Highway	Right-of-Way exists	Crosses Class A wetlands and cuts through existing residential area	Considered the least viable and least desirable option.

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## 8. PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

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*“Small town character—that’s still what we all want. But agreeing on what that means—that’s another story.”*  
Girdwood Planning Team Member

This section describes in more detail the major recommendations of the South Townsite Master Plan that were first outlined in the Executive Summary. These recommendations are based on a number of determining factors that have been presented in the previous chapters, including the community’s expressed objectives for the South Townsite (see Chapter 1), the expectation that Girdwood’s appeal as a year-round community and a tourist destination will continue to grow (see Chapter 2), a variety of environmental and regulatory site constraints (see Chapters 3 and 4), and the precedent setting land use policies in recently adopted community plans (see Chapter 5). In addition, the general concepts proposed in the master plan evolved from the public work sessions held during this master planning process and from subcommittee and HLB feedback on progress drafts and drawings (see Chapter 7).



### Fundamental Project Goals

Early in the planning process, the planning team, South Townsite Subcommittee, and community participants outlined a set of general project goals to provide broad direction for the plan and a basis for evaluating alternative future uses. These goals focus on preserving the spirit and character of a small town, retaining a place for existing civic and recreation uses, and at the same time promoting desirable commercial and residential growth to strengthen the community’s core in the townsite area. Overall, there is a strong community consensus that the desired outcomes of the Master Plan should be to:

- Maintain the heart of Girdwood in the New Girdwood Townsite, both north and south sides—as the active, vital and connected center of Girdwood community life
- Integrate the north and south sides of the townsite by making Egloff Drive an attractive “main street” on both sides of Alyeska Highway and, working with the community and Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (ADOT&PF), by calming traffic on the highway to reduce its divisive impacts



- Create a compact mixed-use village center where residents and visitors can work, live and play, find goods and services, and meet friends and neighbors
- Retain important community uses in the South Townsite—If existing civic uses shift locations, provide for new locations and facilities equal to or better than what exists today
- Retain Girdwood’s small-town character and encourage development with a “light touch”—Preserve ample open space, good views, inviting walking areas and buildings scaled to achieve a pleasant pedestrian environment and to preserve views; natural features and people should predominate over pavement and parking
- Provide for both near-term and long-term change—Resolve near-term needs (a library access road and a new site for Little Bears), clarify the circulation network as a supportive framework for future development, and identify a general arrangement of civic, commercial and residential uses that can reasonably be phased in the future as demand for these becomes clearer and funding becomes available

## Guiding Principles of Community Design for the Girdwood South Townsite Area

Documented relationships between physical design and the intensity of civic activity have led city planners to focus on several essential principles of urban design that consistently help to promote quality of life, environmental quality and economic and social vitality. Equally relevant to Girdwood, these principles guided the planning team’s exploration of conceptual alternatives for the South Townsite area.

**Concentration and diversity of uses:** The level of activity in a district is enhanced when there is a synergistic mix of diverse, interconnected uses within close proximity. In the South Townsite, this suggests that commercial, civic and residential uses should be situated near each other in the northern portion of the study area, where they are readily accessible from the highway and the North Townsite.

**Diversity of and location of housing:** A mix of housing for a range of income levels is a key ingredient in a vibrant year-round community. Housing located within walking distance of commercial areas provides an amenity for residents and a critical support for commercial uses.

**Pedestrian-oriented public spaces:** Focal public spaces entice people to explore, linger and interact with one another in the core of town. Intensity of use in public spaces helps to strengthen a community’s sense of its unique identity. In the heart of Girdwood, this sug-

gests an opportunity for new public gathering spaces carefully created by the arrangement of mixed-use buildings and linked together by pedestrian-oriented corridors.

**Control of automobiles:** For public spaces to be effective in attracting people, the car needs to be made subordinate to pedestrians. Typical measures to accomplish this include traffic calming devices to reduce vehicle speeds, narrower street widths at crosswalks to make crossing on foot safer, wider sidewalks that supply comfortable places to linger, and avoidance of large areas of parking visible from public spaces.

**Relationship of buildings to the street:** In successful small-town commercial core areas, the main street is edged with buildings and sidewalks, not parking lots. (On-street parking, however, is generally considered helpful to the vitality of retail enterprises on the street.) Building frontages offer something of interest to pedestrians – storefront windows, diverse activities, sheltered and sunny places to sit, landscaping, and other visual stimuli.

**Consistency in building scale and character with the community context:** Unique community character derives from respect for the area's history, traditional style and scale of building, and quality of the natural landscape. New building in the South Townsite should reinforce Girdwood's small scale, mountain setting, and history as an Alaskan mining town. Existing development and design standards outlined in Title 21.9 will assist in achieving desired character, but may need to be augmented by additional guidelines specific to the South Townsite area, particularly with regard to Floor Area Ratio (FAR), and to balancing compact, high intensity commercial use with views, a pedestrian-friendly scale, and trees and other natural elements.

**Adequate convenient parking:** Convenient distribution of parking spaces on- and off-street throughout an area of high-intensity use encourages people to park at one location and conduct multiple errands on foot. Joint or shared parking among uses is endorsed as a way to minimize total parking area and create a compact center. Breaking up the parking in smaller, well distributed lots also minimizes the visual impact of parking areas.

**Access to the core area by multiple transportation modes:** The ability to access a mixed-use core area without driving is a major benefit because it reduces the parking and allows a more compact retail area. It also improves health and pedestrian safety. People should be able to travel into and around the South Townsite not only in cars, but also on foot, on bicycles, on skis, and eventually on some form of public transit.

## Recommendations

This section presents the recommended land use plan for the area. From the outset of this planning project, options have been put forward, reviewed, modified, evaluated and refined. There is substantial—but certainly not complete—consensus on all of these recommended strategies.

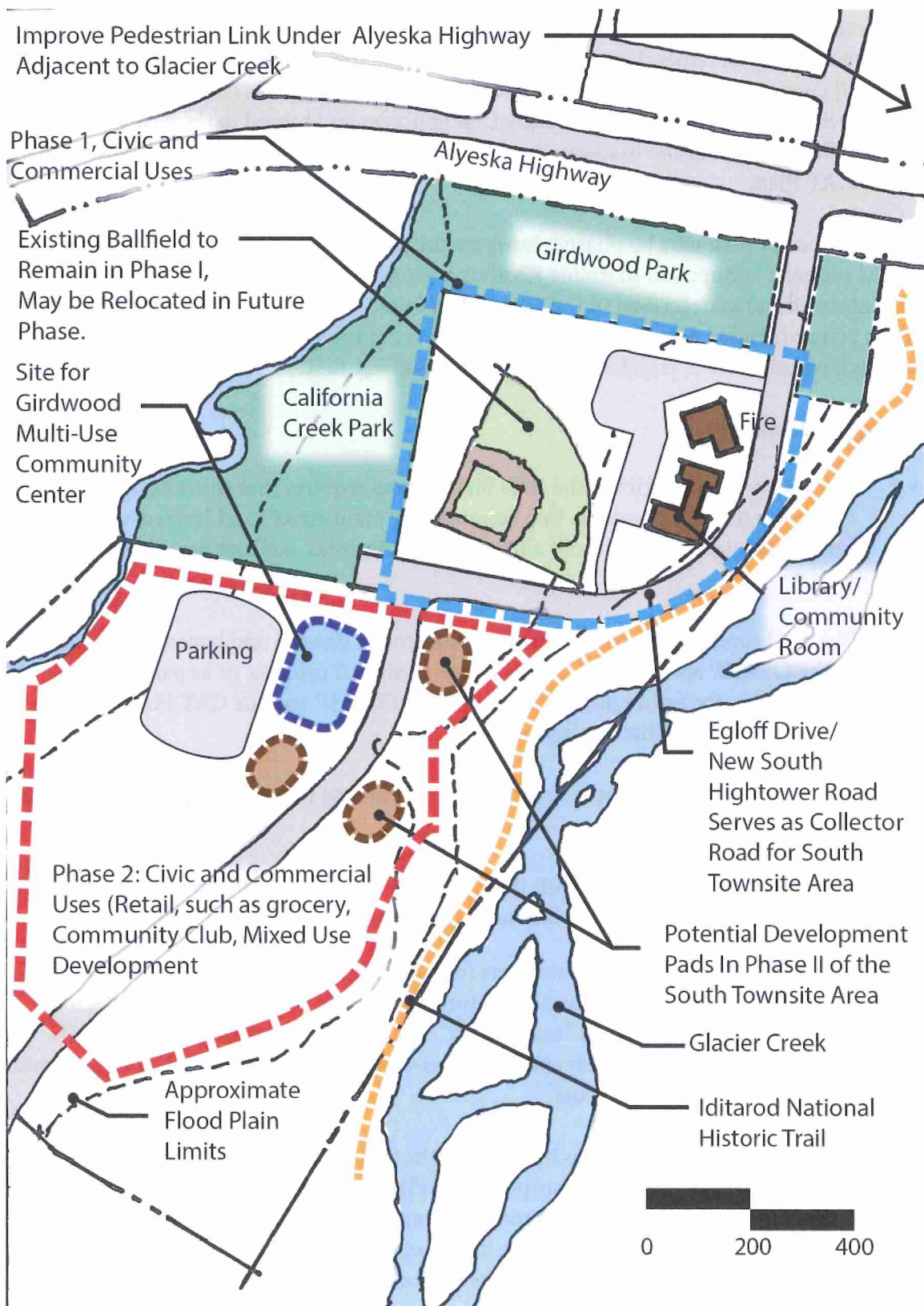
Figure 8.1 shows the recommended land use plan. This drawing shows two different levels of detail. The first phase presents a slightly more illustrative master plan. In this area, where decisions are needed in the near term, the plan sets out fairly specific locations for uses and road improvements. Phase 2 and future phases are presented in much less detail, in recognition of the fact that specific decisions on uses in these areas have yet to be made.

### 1. Vehicular Circulation

The Fire Station and the Library/Community Center require a paved access road from the Alyeska Highway. This paved road will also provide the primary access for the remainder of the South Townsite extending to the south. Sufficient funding is currently available for construction of the Egloff Drive portion of circulation improvements. Within Phase 1, two options for this access route were considered. One alternative would be to use the existing east-side road (as shown on Figure 8.1). This offers the advantage of using an established route and avoids placing a road between the “kids’ zone” and the library. The second option re-routes the road corridor to the west side of the Firehouse and Library/Community Center. The considered advantages and disadvantages for each of the routes include the following:

- **East Side:** Advantages include that there is already a road corridor there and that the Library/Community Center was constructed to address that roadway as the front entrance; the roadway right-of-way does not impact parking that is already established for the Fire Station and Library/Community Center; and the new roadway does not separate the “kids route” from the school to the library. Disadvantages include that the roadway enters the 200-foot set-back from the highwater mark of Glacier Creek and it is believed that a variance must be sought for approval of the road at that location
- **West Side:** The advantage of the west side location is that the road corridor avoids floodplains and required stream setbacks and the corridor could provide improved access to other Heritage Land Bank (HLB) property. Disadvantages include bisecting access from the “Kids Zone” to the west and north and the Library, disruption of parking for both the Fire Station and the Library/Community Center, and making the back side of the Library/Community Center the new front entry

**Figure 8.1, Recommended Land Use Plan**



## ***Current Recommendation***

The community, through public meetings, the Girdwood Land-Use Committee and the Girdwood Board of Supervisors has indicated a desire to maintain the east alignment of the road corridor. The Area Master Plan recommends that Egloff Drive be extended for the Fire Station and Library/Community Center access and routed to the east side, nearest Glacier Creek. Placing the roadway in this location will require an associated amendment to the CAT Plan.

The area master plan may be phased, however the final configuration of the area's second access (either a connection to Ruane Road or a connection to the Alyeska Highway by way of Juniper Drive) as described in the OS&HP and the CAT Plan must be identified and those plans amended accordingly prior to or as part of the Development Master Plan for phases beyond phase 2, whichever requires the roadway first.

## ***Design Details***

- The gC5 zoning district in the site's Phase I area requires that street design and configuration include standards that support the "main street" and "mixed-use" environments intended for the old and new townsite areas. concept per AMC 21.09.070, Para 4
- The final configuration of the collector shown for Phase 2 and beyond, as described in the OS&HP and the CAT Plan shall be identified prior to, or as part of the development plan for future development and the OS&HP and the CAT Plans shall be amended to reflect that configuration
- The design will provide sufficient fire station parking to accommodate approximately 40 volunteers
- The project team will work with the ADOT&PF to calm traffic on the Alyeska Highway, and improve pedestrian crossings between the old and new townsites

Chapter 9 of Title 21 includes requirements for collector, townsite commercial, and local streets in Girdwood. Egloff Drive and the future Karolius Drive will be both collector streets and a townsite commercial "main street." The minimum requirements in AMC 21.09.070F require pavement, curb and gutter, on-street parking, paved sidewalks of seven feet or greater, and limited curb cuts.

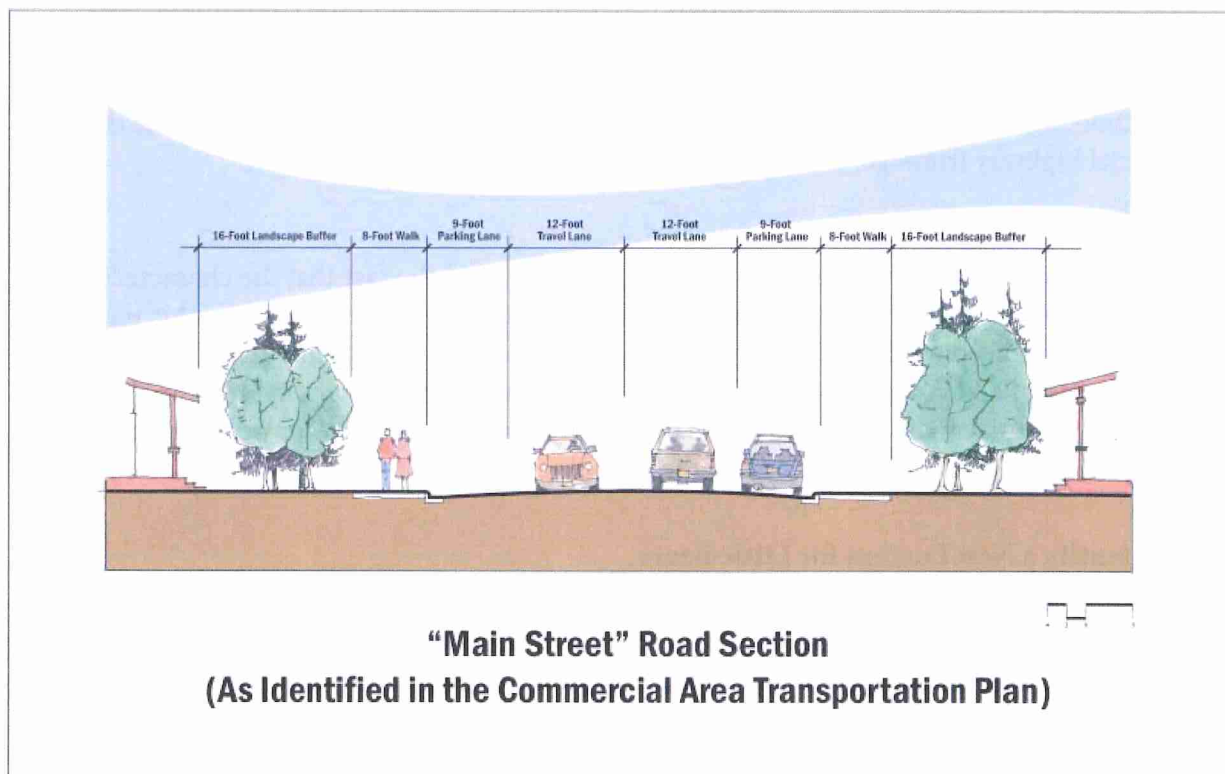
A number of the recommendations included in the South Townsite Plan are sourced from the Girdwood Commercial Area Transportation Plan, approved February 20, 2001. That plan is now 13 years old and like most master plans, the value of the plan has decreased over time. The CAT plan calls for specific uses, such as a golf course, churches, grocery stores, and other development desired by the community that has never come to fruition.



In some cases, land use zones, such as the GCR-1, were established for a specific landuse (golf course) that never came to be. The CAT plan of 2001 demonstrates the risk of identifying specific development types or prescribing infrastructure requirements, such as covered walkways based on development of anticipated specific uses. This plan recommends a number of specific amendments to the CAT Plan of 2001, but it should be noted that the CAT plan, as a whole, is due for an update.

In designing Egloff Drive as the collector road for the South Townsite development, Chapter 9 of Title 21 requires specific improvements. Within the area zoned gC-5 (New Townsite, South Commercial) District, Title 21 requires on-street parking, curb and gutter, and walkways on both sides. These improvements, will be required for the roadway in the first two phases of the South Townsite Area development. Future phases proceeding south into the South Townsite area will be developed to collector standards as identified in Title 21, Chapter 21.09.070 para f, 3, Collector streets. The gC-5 zoning district requires a minimum 16 foot front building setback; further development decisions should accommodate walkways and landscaping in this area in a way that contributes to the overall main street design and function.

**Figure 8.2, Egloff Drive, “Main Street” Cross Section**



Development into Phase 2 of the South Townsite area will require a longer access road than is typically allowed without having a second point of access. The Fire Marshall has some discretion in allowing development on a longer road if such development meets specific requirements and if there is a commitment to ultimately provide a second access. Key factors for such an approval include the type of development and improvements that may mitigate fire risk. Any new development into Phase 2 will require approval from the fire department. At some point, depending on the type of development, a second access into the South Townsite will be required. The current preferred second access is by way of a connection to Ruane Road to the South. A second option is a connection to Alyeska Highway through a platted right-of-way on Juniper Drive. Both options will be very expensive to construct and a detailed assessment will eventually determine which is the better route. Given the limited area of truly developable land in the South Townsite (land outside of creek setbacks, wetlands, and flood zones), the ability of a private developer to make the improvements necessary for a second access into the South Townsite may not be economically viable. The need to provide a second access into the South Townsite Area is likely to be the greatest obstacle to future development.

## **2. Retain the Kids' Playground and Skateboard Park in Their Existing Locations**

### ***Background***

The skateboard park and kids' playground are centrally located in the community, visible from the highway, accessible, safe and well-used by children of a wide range of ages. These two amenities for kids were hand-built by the community and are viewed with great affection. The challenge for the planning process is that this same area is also prime commercial highway frontage.

### ***Current Recommendation***

Given the value of the existing park to the community and the fact that the characteristics that make it so successful could be difficult to re-create in a different location, this plan recommends keeping the playground and the skateboard park in their current location. As the core of a kids' recreational zone, they can contribute to the vitality of future development in a mixed-use South Townsite by providing an opportunity for people to come to the area to shop and do errands while the kids play.

## **3. Identify a New Location for Little Bears**

### ***Background***

Little Bears Playhouse childcare center is an institution in Girdwood. However, the existing Little Bears building is undersized and in poor condition. The group that operates the facility has been working with the Municipality to reserve land and raise money to fund a new building. Confirmation of a specific site for the new building is a prerequisite to proceeding with the project and acquiring needed funding.

### ***Current Recommendation***

The master plan recommends relocating Little Bears to a site identified on Figure 8.1 as the Girdwood Multi-Use Community Center. The Little Bears child care facility would share facilities at this location with a new health clinic and an indoor community athletic facility. Efforts are currently underway to obtain the necessary funding. Access to the Girdwood Multi-Use Community Center would be provided by a small access road extending from the end of Egloff Drive.

## **4. Improve the Venue for the Forest Fair**

### ***Background***

The annual Forest Fair has long been a treasured highlight of life in Girdwood. In recent years, however, Forest Fair attendance and associated problems (illegal camping, inadequate parking, disruption of local life) have steadily grown. The Forest Fair Committee, many people in the community, the Parks and Recreation Department, and the Heritage Land Bank have all been questioning if and how the Forest Fair should continue. The objective of this plan is to support the community as it works to find ways to improve the Forest Fair and make it a better fit with community needs.

### ***Recommendation***

This plan recommends that, in the near term, the event venue and both pavilions remain where they are today. However, it envisions a phased relocation of event activities to the southern portion of the study area, where there is more space to accommodate the fair and better potential to develop greatly improved parking, support facilities, and systems to control access into the event.

## **5. Protect and Improve the Iditarod Trail**

### ***Background***

The Iditarod Trail is an important recreational and historic resource that passes through the South Townsite area. The Heritage Land Bank has an agreement with the US Forest Service, which manages the trail, to reserve a route for the Iditarod Trail.

### ***Recommendation***

This master plan shows the trail generally where it is today, within the 200-foot Glacier Creek setback on the west side of the creek and approximately 100 feet from the banks; a more specific alignment will need to be field-located. The goal is to locate the trail so that it will not be at risk of damage from shifting creek channels, but close enough to provide users with views of and contact with the water. It is also intended that the trail provide attractive pedestrian access to destinations throughout the study area. As shown on the illustrative plan, the eventual objective is to make the primary Iditarod Trail part of a major trail system through the South Townsite, connecting commercial, recreational and residential destinations.

## **6. Provide for a Flexible Mix of Civic and Commercial Uses**

### ***Background***

Both the Girdwood Area Plan and the CAT Plan identify the entire New Girdwood Townsite as the preferred location in Girdwood for local-serving commercial development. This central node offers several benefits:

- The combination of new commercial and civic uses helps anchor the townsite and increases the potential that this area will become the true heart of Girdwood
- Concentrated commercial development in the South Townsite is preferred to development dispersed in other parts of the community, such as along the Seward Highway, because this central location can be reached relatively easily without a car and can become a convenient hub for local transit service
- Commercial uses in this location would complement the visitor-serving retail that will concentrate at the resort

The South Townsite has a range of civic uses today (Girdwood Fire Station, Little Bears Playhouse childcare center, Library and Community Room, Girdwood Community Club/KEUL radio station, kids' playground, skate park, tennis court, Forest Fair pavilions, campground, ball park); the area also is a potential site for future civic and commercial uses (e.g., new Girdwood Community Club building, community center, health clinic, etc.). Several options were considered for this area (see draft drawings in Chapter 7), including limiting the South Townsite to civic and recreation uses or, alternatively, focusing on commercial uses. The attraction of the first option is that it maintains the area's character largely as it is today; the attraction of the second option is that it allows for new commercial development adjacent to the Alyeska Highway, where access and visibility are best.

The latter option also provides a place for commercial development and larger civic facilities that cannot be accommodated within the configuration of narrow platted lots in the North Townsite.

### ***Recommendation***

The South Townsite Master Plan recommends that the northernmost portion of the study area be used for a well-planned mix of commercial and civic activities, as shown in the illustrative site plan. It further recommends that commercial development focus on local-serving uses not currently available in Girdwood. A particular goal is to provide space for a grocery store of about 15,000 square feet (approximately the size of New Sagaya's City Market in Anchorage) and associated retail services, such as a bank, small hardware store or dry cleaners. Developments that have retail or civic uses on the ground floor and civic, housing, or office uses on upper floors are encouraged.

Because the timing of development will be driven by market demand, the near-term intent of this master plan is simply to ensure that space is reserved in the South Townsite to accommodate the eventual expansion of commercial activity in a coordinated way as demand warrants. The planned expansion of the ski area, plus new housing at Crow Creek and at the resort, are expected to combine with existing demand to support expanded commercial uses. However, if, after a reasonable period of time, no developers express interest in the South Townsite, this strategy for land use could be reconsidered.

### ***Design Details***

This area could be used for a mix of uses; for example, buildings could have retail on the ground floor with the option for civic, housing, or office uses on upper floors.

Civic uses would also be appropriate in this location, particularly where intermixed with retail space (e.g., Girdwood Community Club, community center, or clinic), provided that funds are available to construct or lease space.

Development standards specific to this area are recommended to allow flexibility in the type and mix of uses without compromising the desired character of the mixed-use district. These standards shall include modestly-sized structures, pedestrian amenities, a requirement that buildings present an attractive façade to the street, and a maximum building setback intended to preserve desired spatial relationships between buildings and the street.

## **7. Provide Required Access Routes within and Through the South Townsite**

### ***Background***

It is anticipated that existing regulations for fire safety and code limits on the maximum length of cul-de-sac roads will eventually trigger the need to develop a second access route into and out of the South Townsite. The platted right-of-way for a second access was part of the 1964 First Addition plat (see Chapter 6) but is not favored today because of cost and wetlands impacts. The option of extending a road south to Ruane Road is also seen as a very expensive long-term possibility.

### ***Recommendation***

In part to make recommended development affordable, this master plan recommends a phased approach to the building of roads in the South Townsite. The extension of Egloff Drive will accomplish the immediate objectives of providing access to the new library, the relocated Little Bears, and first-phase commercial and other civic developments. In the initial phase of development, this can likely be accomplished without triggering the need for the second access road. In subsequent phases, as Girdwood's population increases, the extension of roads and infrastructure can proceed in step with evolving market demand. At the point when the amount of development warrants the second access, an evaluation



will be completed for the Juniper Drive access and the extension to Ruane Road to determine which will provide the most value for the cost of improvements.

## **8. Provide Adequate Parking to Support New Development**

### ***Background***

A primary project goal is to assure sufficient parking to support existing and future civic, commercial and retail activities, but also to develop no more parking than is reasonably needed for day-to-day requirements at each stage of development.

Traditional zoning codes typically set minimum off-street parking requirements for all uses. Development in the South Townsite will be required to adhere to the parking standards set forth in Chapter 9 of Title 21 of the Anchorage Municipal Code. The existing parking code requires four spaces per 1,000 square feet of commercial space, which includes most civic uses, and slightly less than that for certain office uses. Provisions relating to parking for non-residential uses allow some flexibility in locating off-site parking for commercial development, and there may be some flexibility in the calculation of required parking quantities, depending upon the mix of uses and proximity to alternate modes of access. As part of the process currently underway to revise Title 21, the Municipality may recommend reductions in parking standards for certain office and multifamily uses in some areas. In addition to general parking associated with commercial, civic and residential uses within the South Townsite, the Girdwood Fire Department will need 40 dedicated parking spaces for volunteer firefighters. These spaces are to be located near the fire station but not along the access route used by the fire trucks.

### ***Recommendations***

In the long-term, this master plan for the South Townsite encourages the development of on-street parking, shared parking among complementary uses, alternative modes of circulation (including public transit), and residential neighborhoods within walking distance. With such strategies, the off-street parking requirement might be reduced by as much as an estimated 10-30 percent. Parking plans must also take into account the probability that a certain number of spaces will be lost to snow storage in winter.

To achieve an appealing pedestrian environment and preserve the natural feel of the Girdwood Valley, extra effort must be made in the South Townsite to limit the visual intrusion of cars and parking. In each development phase, techniques to locate parking lots behind buildings that front the street, to screen parking lots with landscaping, and to distribute parking areas in smaller lots throughout the core area are strongly encouraged. On-street parking in the rights-of-way along new interior streets, in the style of small-town main streets, is endorsed as an effective means to augment the parking supply without relying entirely on parking lots. Overall, this master plan recommends that each development phase be carefully evaluated to balance its proposed layout and density with the visual

impact of its required parking on the desired small-town character of the core area. As the South Townsite is built out, it will be critically important that the layout of parking proposed for each successive phase of development is seamlessly connected to the network of circulation and parking constructed in the previous phases.

## **9. Provide a Range of Modestly Priced Housing**

### ***Background***

Girdwood is an attractive small town and a resort community surrounded by public land. As in many other resort communities, privately-owned developable land is a scarce commodity. Girdwood, like other such communities, has experienced rapid and dramatic increases in housing prices and a consequent shortage of housing options available to local residents. The South Townsite area, with its level, buildable terrain and good access, offers a particularly good location for moderately-priced housing. Housing in this location offers the benefit of proximity to stores, restaurants and services, and residents' spending will help to support those businesses.

### ***Recommendation***

This master plan recommends a modest number of residential units (30-80 units) at moderate densities (6-14 units per acre). This implies a focus on duplexes and triplexes, cottage-style, single-family detached homes on land held in common and small multi-family structures (4-8 unit buildings). The overall objective of this plan is to offer small, market-rate residences that are within the reach of people of modest incomes, particularly local employees. Depending on the timing of new civic and commercial development and the build-out of roads and infrastructure, this housing would likely be offered in the third phase of the project in a location south of the existing baseball field. In addition, the plan recommends reserving the option for housing above commercial and/or civic uses along Egloff Drive in the first and/or second phases of the project. Finally, the issue of the appropriate amount of housing in the area will be revisited for the southern portions of the project area (Phase 4). This area is not likely to be served by roads and therefore unlikely to be developable for a number of years. Conditions and most appropriate uses will need to be re-evaluated if and when the road network is built out to this area. It is hoped that housing construction in the South Townsite can be provided at a somewhat lower cost per square foot than in other parts of Girdwood, due to buildable terrain, good access and the existence of water, sewer and other infrastructure.

### ***Design Details***

- Establish standards that ensure housing is a good fit with Girdwood character
- Permit housing at moderate densities, approximately 6-14 units per acre. Housing styles will include small multifamily structures (4-8 units), duplexes and triplexes, and cottage-style, single-family detached homes on land held in common

## 10. Create Development Standards Specific to the South Townsite

### *Background*

Over the course of the project there has been general agreement that future development in the Girdwood core needs to maintain the community's low key small-town character, including access to open space, trees, views and community landmarks. The ultimate success of development will be strongly affected by the character of what is built—parking, streetscape, and landscaping as well as buildings.

### *Recommendations*

Title 21, Chapter 9 sets a general policy framework for maintaining Girdwood's small-town mountain character, but the strict application of Municipal standards for road widths, road surfaces, parking, etc. could work against this goal. Standards that apply specifically to the South Townsite area may be necessary to allow for and encourage the development character sought by this plan, which includes:

- A pedestrian-oriented environment where a mixture of uses can be concentrated without overwhelming the natural character of the site.
- Buildings that respond to Girdwood's natural setting and climate, and that are modest in scale, comparable to existing commercial structures in the North Townsite. (An exception regarding building scale could be made to accommodate a grocery store and its associated uses)
- Civic and commercial buildings that help define an attractive main street setting where locals and visitors have a variety of places to congregate year-round
- Roads and streetscape scaled to the character of a small community, not an urban downtown
- Connective multi-modal infrastructure (trails, bike paths, weather-sheltered sidewalks, shuttle bus stops, etc) that helps to unify the entire townsite area by means other than autos

## 11. Calm Traffic on the Alyeska Highway

### *Background*

Construction of the new Girdwood Library has initiated development in the South Townsite, and this plan looks ahead to a fully-developed town center that encompasses the townsite areas north and south of Alyeska Highway. Gradual development north and south of the highway can initially be accommodated with a simple intersection at Egloff Drive. But with time and a growing number of uses south of the highway, the number of pedestrian, bicycle and auto trips crossing the highway will increase. Given the existing configuration of the intersection, an increase in the amount of traffic crossing the highway will present both safety and delay issues for crossing and turning traffic. In addition, because the highway essentially bisects what is envisioned as the future town center, it will become even more difficult for residents and visitors to use both the North and South Townsites without driving from one to the other. Changes are needed so this road can continue to serve as a primary access route to the resort and other upvalley developments, while at the same time making it more inviting and safer for vehicles and pedestrians to cross the road. Desirable objectives for the Alyeska Highway/Hightower-Egloff intersection area include:

- Safe passage for pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles, especially for those crossing the Alyeska Highway
- Easy passage for pedestrians and bicyclists from one side of the highway to the other
- Maintenance of traffic flow on the Alyeska Highway, especially at peak traffic times
- Roadway configuration such that the highway does not function as a barrier between the two halves of the New Girdwood Townsite

Alyeska Highway improvements are not within the scope of this project, but the master planning team considers it essential that a collaborative planning process be initiated as soon as possible. This master plan recommends that representatives from the Municipality (responsible for Egloff Drive and Karolius Drive), HLB, the Girdwood Board of Supervisors Land Use Committee, and ADOT&PF (the agency responsible for the Alyeska Highway) meet to review the emerging plan for the South Townsite and to begin identifying the means for better linking development on both sides of the Alyeska Highway.

## *A Process for Initiating Change*

Detailed design of the intersection will be part of an ADOT&PF intersection improvement project, but at this point, months or years ahead of the project itself, the following steps should be taken in order to initiate the intersection improvement project:

- ADOT&PF planning staff should meet with the Girdwood South Townsite Subcommittee, the Heritage Land Bank, and the Municipality of Anchorage Department of Project Management and Engineering (PM&E), to review the emerging plan for the New Girdwood Townsite and to get a sense of the future pedestrian, bike and auto traffic that will cross and turn onto the Alyeska Highway at Hightower Road-Egloff Drive
- Basic goals and criteria for an intersection improvement project should be developed that all parties support
- Discussion should occur about the various approaches that might be taken to improve the intersection. For example, a roundabout, traffic signal, median on Alyeska Highway with turn pockets, and other approaches should be reviewed in conceptual form

Advantages and disadvantages of each approach should be discussed and documented. Following initial work with the community and at the point in time when the intersection meets warrants for improvement, ADOT&PF staff will initiate an improvement project. Open communication and community involvement in the development of project concepts and ideas will help to ensure that the State's project objectives align closely with those of the community. On other occasions, the State has worked successfully with communities where the function of through-roads needs to change to respond to changes in adjoining land use. The "Glitter Gulch" area at the entry to Denali National Park is one such example. The Parks Highway crosses through the center of this area and is lined on both sides by shops, restaurants and hotels. In that situation, ADOT&PF worked with local landowners, the Denali Borough, the National Park Service and other state agencies to dramatically change the character of the road where it crosses through this commercial district. Speed limits have been reduced, medians and traffic signals installed, and a new design for lighting, signage and landscaping implemented. The result has been a much safer stretch of highway, without a significant reduction in the ability of the road to carry through-traffic.

### Possible Options

A similar set of changes is needed on Alyeska Highway where it crosses the New Girdwood Townsite. Options for specific improvements could include:

- Inclusion of roundabouts at the intersections with Crow Creek Road, Holmgren Avenue, and Hightower Road. It is anticipated these intersection changes would cost between 1 million and 2 million dollars per intersection



- Consider a pedestrian underpass (e.g., as part of the bridge over California or Glacier Creeks)
- Install features that convey to drivers the clear need to slow down: medians with landscaping and boulders, a narrower road profile, textured crosswalks, or a roundabout. These strategies are preferable to approaches that leave the road essentially as it is today, relying only on the addition of flashing lights, signage, painted crosswalks and reduced speed limits
- Add signage, public art, special light fixtures or other features to let people know that they have arrived in the heart of Girdwood and to create a stronger sense of entry and community identity

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## 9. Implementation

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### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the steps needed to move forward with the Girdwood South Townsite Master Plan, taking care to implement community priorities. Specific topics covered include:

- Partnerships for development
- Phasing and capital projects
- Development standards and associated modifications in land use regulations



The overarching theme of this section is that the ability to implement this plan—for example, to develop new community facilities, new roads or new trails—requires support from a number of sources, including private developers, the Girdwood community and related community organizations, and governments, including the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF), and the US Forest Service. With the rare exception of major community facilities that receive funding from state and federal governments or foundations, most of the infrastructure improvements called for in the plan will be paid for by private developers, working in partnership with the Municipality.

### Partnerships for Development

The details of the process to implement projects created by a public-private partnership (such as the partnership between HLB and potential developers) will be worked out on a case-by-case basis. For example, in a case where the Heritage Land Bank was to sell a large parcel, without subdividing, a new developer would be required to develop roads, trails, stormwater management and other infrastructure, as well as doing the necessary surveying and project permitting. In other cases, where HLB is subdividing property, Municipal Code would require that standard subdivision improvements such as roads, water and sewer infrastructure would be paid for by HLB. Depending on the specific arrangement, HLB might adjust the terms of the land sale or lease to offset some of the developer's costs. HLB may also impose specific design guidelines on developers to ensure that the goals and intentions of this plan are met in the implementation phase.

In addition to working with private developers, a range of other types of partners will be needed to carry out plan recommendations. For example, public or quasi-public facilities such as a proposed community club, community center, child care center or health clinic

will only be possible with the support of local and statewide nonprofits. HLB can play a strong supporting role in these instances, but the initiative for and the lead role on such projects will rest with the community.

There is no set amount of land that is slated for public development or for private development; it is the general intent to have a healthy mix of both civic, commercial, recreation/open space, residential and other uses in the South Townsite area. Specific projects and land uses will be assessed as interest and need arises.

## Phasing and Capital Improvements

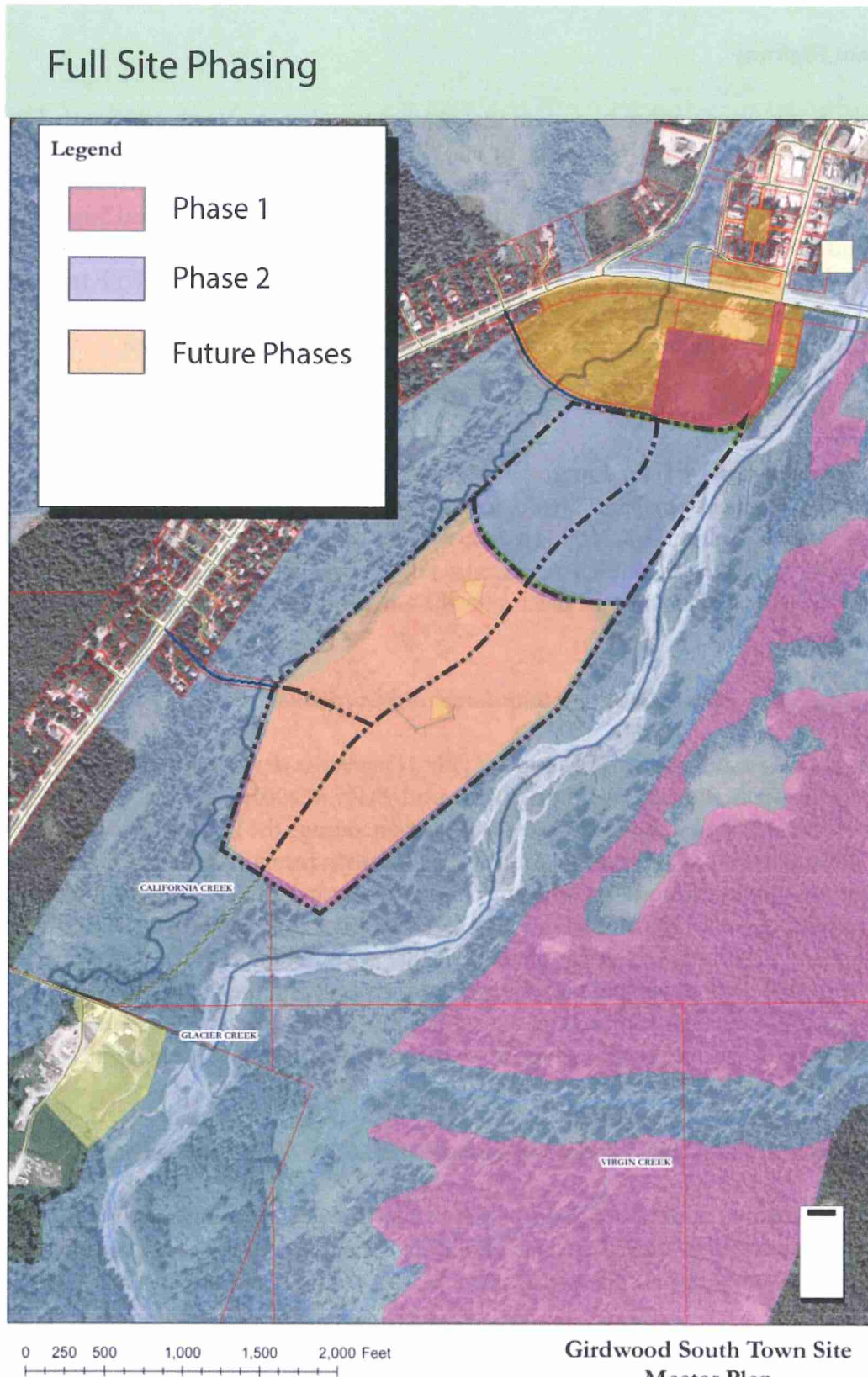
Implementing the plan is expected to require a phased approach. The map on the opposite page illustrates the likely major phases in the implementation process; the table that follows provides more details on elements within each phase. A key piece to this approach is HLB's commitment to work with the Girdwood community to find sites for and, where appropriate, assist in the development of any community facilities that require relocation.

**Table 9.1, Girdwood South Townsite Area Plan, Implementation**

Phase	Community Facilities & Roads	Responsibilities
Phase 1	Egloff Drive Improvements (Library Access)	MOA working with State/Fed\$
	Iditarod Trail Improvements	HLB with support from USFS
	Unspecified Commercial Development	HLB
Phase 2	Relocate Little Bears, Construct new Community Facility	Little Bears, Health Clinic with Support from MOA and HLB
	Forest Fair Grounds Upgrades	Girdwood Community, Parks and Rec, working with HLB
	Begin Construction of Korolius Drive.	MOA working with State/Fed\$
	Iditarod Trail Improvements	USFS working with HLB
	Community Facilities not Otherwise accounted for (i.e. Radio Station)	Sponsoring Organizations, working with MOA/HLB
	Unspecified Commercial Development	HLB
Future Phases	Second Access, either by way of Juniper Drive or by connection to Ruane Road	MOA working with State/Fed\$
	Iditarod Trail	HLB with support from USFS
	Housing	Private Developer with HLB or Subsidized Housing State or Federal Agency
	Campground/RV Park	Private Developer with HLB



Map 9.1, Full Site Phasing





## Other Implementation Actions

### *Alyeska Highway*

Alyeska Highway can either be a seam that stitches together the North and South Townsites or a barrier dividing these areas. By adopting this plan, the Municipality and the Girdwood community make clear their intent to change the character of Alyeska as it traverses the New Townsite, with the objective of connecting the North and South Townsites and making this crossing easier, safer and more attractive by foot or vehicle, throughout the year. The primary means to reach this end is to work with ADOT&PF to prepare a design for needed changes to the highway, and then to secure the necessary funding. Chapter 6 of this plan outlines specific design options to achieve this intent.

### *Iditarod Trail*

As is shown in Table 9.1, the Iditarod Trail traverses the length of the project area. At present this trail is an informal and incomplete dirt pathway. Under a pre-existing agreement between the USFS and HLB, HLB is responsible for reserving a route for the Iditarod Trail through the project area. The specific location of the trail will be addressed during the platting process, which will take place after the Girdwood South Townsite Master Plan has been adopted.

### *Girdwood South Townsite Design Standards and Guidelines*

The Anchorage municipal land use code (Title 21) governs development in all areas of the Municipality of Anchorage, including Girdwood. Prior to 2005, there was a concern that the more urban standards in the code would not encourage the kind of development patterns considered more appropriate for a small mountain resort community. In response, a major revision to the code applying specifically to Girdwood was adopted in November 2005 as Chapter 9 of Title 21. Title 21, Chapter 9 codifies zoning districts, allowed uses, development standards and design guidelines that are tailored for Girdwood conditions and that support the development concepts recommended in the adopted Girdwood CAT Plan for commercial core areas, including the South Townsite area. An adequate regulatory framework is in place to encourage implementation of the concepts generally illustrated in this plan.

### *Standards and Guidelines for the Main Street Mixed-Use Neighborhood*

Among the desired qualities of the new main street are pedestrian orientation, human scale, and inviting character. Activated with public spaces and a variety of commercial enterprises, it should be an interesting place to walk through and explore. It should be

active during most times of day and all seasons of the year. To achieve these qualities, the following design strategies are encouraged along Hightower Road/Egloff Drive in addition to those already outlined in Title 21.09:

- Buildings must be designed to have a positive relationship to the street. The façades facing the main street should have interesting storefronts, sheltered entries and arcades, well-crafted signage, and other design elements that add color and visual stimulus. There should be no blank walls facing the street
- Buildings with commercial or retail space on the ground floor are encouraged to provide outdoor alcoves for seating where they can be sheltered and exposed to midday sun. Restaurant spaces in particular should be located where they can develop synergistic indoor-outdoor relationships
- An important characteristic of Girdwood is the forested landscape and the continuity of natural habitats (21.09.070.E.1). The intent of the code is to retain trees and natural vegetation by requiring a minimum of 10 percent of a site to remain in natural vegetation and 20 percent of the site in permeable surfaces. The code encourages preservation of trees in the setbacks and along street frontages. On the main street, retention or replacement of mature trees will be essential in conveying the desired image of a small town commercial core. Seasonal flowers and other landscaping are strongly encouraged to soften the buildings and attract pedestrians
- Creative, energy-efficient approaches to outdoor lighting are encouraged to create an inviting ambiance in all seasons. Full cut-off fixtures that hide the light source are required. Light bollards and building-mounted lighting are encouraged in public spaces and arcades. Over-lighting is discouraged. Pole-mounted fixtures for pedestrian pathways should not exceed 10 feet in height. Use of a consistent pole-mounted pedestrian fixture throughout the neighborhood is encouraged
- Snow storage areas should be located where they will not interfere with the intended uses of public spaces and pathways along the street. Areas intended for snow storage should be paved or landscaped with vegetation that can tolerate snow storage. Building roofs should not pitch snow toward the main street or primary pedestrian walkways
- Off-street parking and service areas should not front the street. Wherever possible, surface parking lots and trash enclosures should be located behind the buildings or well screened from the street

- Access driveways into off-street parking should enter from an alley or from the proposed secondary street, as a proliferation of access driveways from the main street will disrupt the continuity of pedestrian pathways, on-street parking, and retail frontages. Use of consolidated entry driveways by multiple development parcels is encouraged in order to achieve efficient circulation into and through the off-street parking areas