



Girdwood

AREA PLAN



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

Girdwood

AREA PLAN

ADOPTED FEBRUARY 28, 1995
(ASSEMBLY ORDINANCE 94-238 S)



PREPARED BY THE
PHYSICAL PLANNING DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT



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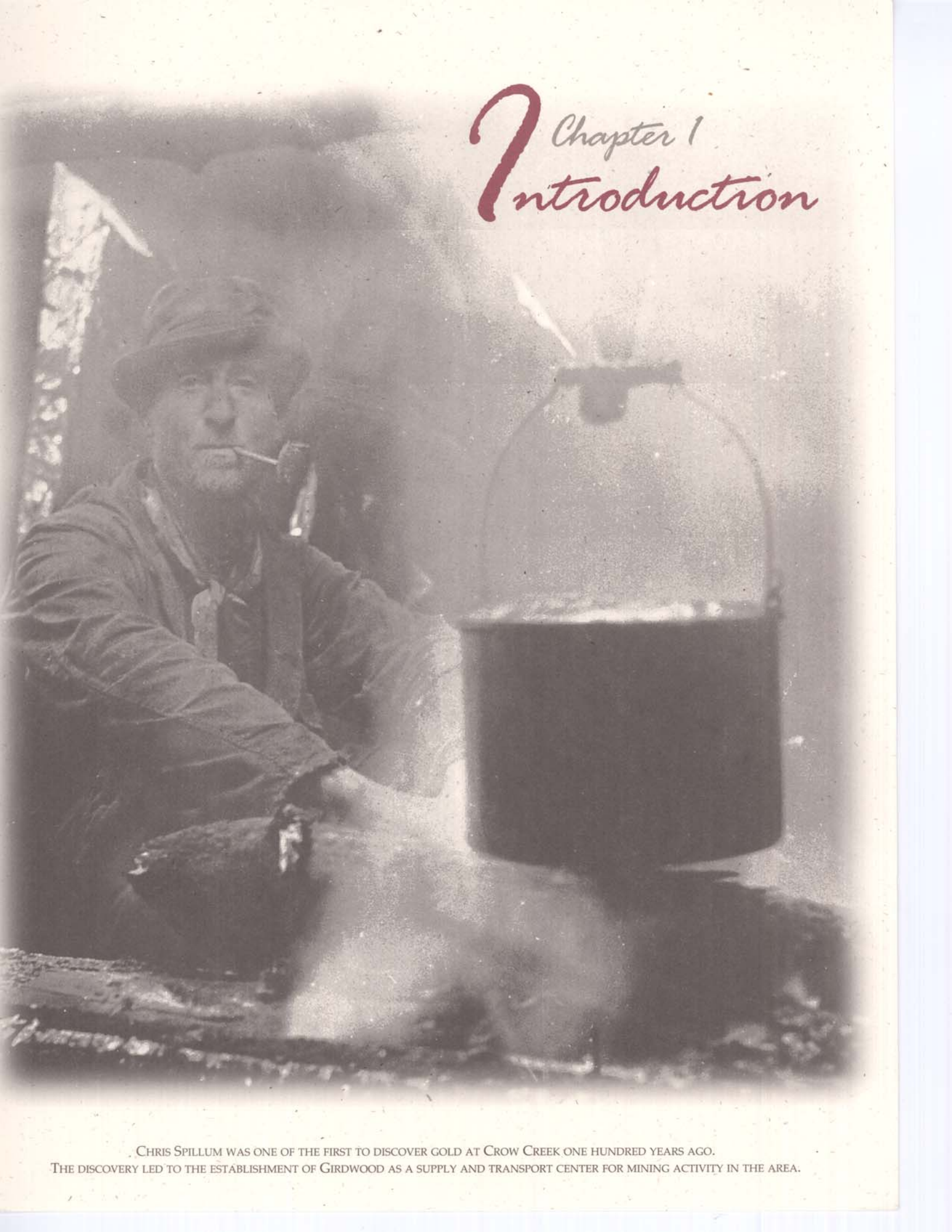
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Chapter 1
Introduction

CHRIS SPILLUM WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TO DISCOVER GOLD AT CROW CREEK ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.
THE DISCOVERY LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GIRDWOOD AS A SUPPLY AND TRANSPORT CENTER FOR MINING ACTIVITY IN THE AREA.



Skiers on the Glacier/Winner Creek massif looking southwest toward Girdwood and Turnagain Arm.

The **Girdwood Area Plan** has been prepared to provide community residents and public officials with a policy document to guide decisions regarding the future use of lands in the valley of Glacier Creek and its tributaries.* As a policy document, it is intended to outline general strategies for land development and the installation of major public facilities and services, such as water, sewer, transportation, parks, and trails. It also provides basic strategies for disposal of municipal land, as well as the conservation and protection of certain natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas.

The **Girdwood Area Plan** is a revision of the **Turnagain Arm Comprehensive Plan**. The **Turnagain Arm Comprehensive Plan** was adopted in 1987 as a policy guide for development in all the settlement areas along Turnagain Arm from Rainbow to Portage. This Plan supersedes the 1987 plan only in regard to the Girdwood valley.

The primary impetus for the development of this Plan is the transfer of major land holdings in the upper valleys of Glacier Creek and its two tributaries, Crow and Winner Creeks, from the U.S. Forest Service to the State of Alaska and the Municipality of Anchorage. Accompanying this land transfer is an increased interest in additional major destination resort development.

Previous investigations by the U.S. Forest Service and the Municipality indicated that the Glacier-Winner Creek area has attractive characteristics for new resort/recreational development. This was confirmed in a more recent study undertaken by Snoengineering, Inc., for the Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

The **Girdwood Area Plan** is an integrated land use plan that encompasses both the upper and lower portions of the valley. The central issues that the Plan addresses are community growth, resort development, and retention of open spaces. Presently, Girdwood is a small mountain resort community with an economy heavily based on tourism and recreation. The community will continue to grow over the next several years as a result of resort/recreational expansion.

Girdwood will also continue to grow as a result of its closer proximity to Anchorage in commuting time as transportation improvements are made along Turnagain Arm, and employment centers expand in South Anchorage.

*Also referred to as Girdwood valley or Girdwood area.

Key elements in ensuring that community change is beneficial and new resort development is compatible will be transportation and circulation patterns, and the retention of important natural open spaces. This Plan does not attempt to debate whether Girdwood should develop further, but instead focuses on where to build, how much, and how to build well.

The Plan focuses on the physical development patterns of the Girdwood valley. It is intended to deal with conditions and events expected to occur during the next 20 years, and attendant resulting needs or demands for public facilities and services. This length of time is the usual limit of demographic and economic forecasting, and also corresponds to the time period used in the design of most major public facilities.

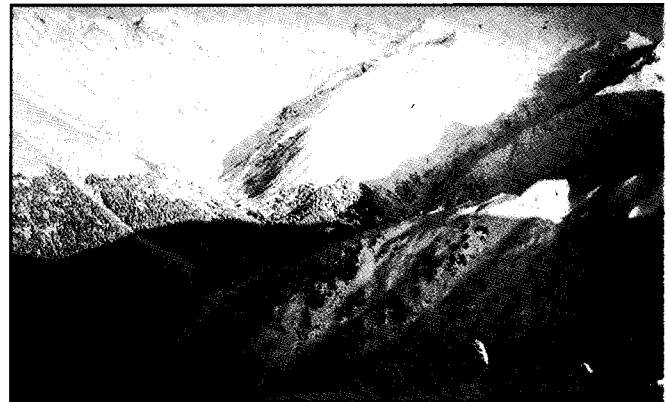
The Plan is based upon a given set of community aspirations, economic and demographic trends and projections, and environmental features. In the future, some of these factors may change. For that reason, planning should be viewed as a continuing process.

The direction outlined in this Plan for community and resort development is based upon information available at this particular time. In the future, new developments may occur and the needs of the community may change. Consequently, the Plan should be reviewed periodically and, if appropriate, revised in the future in response to new conditions.

Plan Development Process

The State of Alaska and the Municipality of Anchorage are in the process of acquiring additional lands in the upper valley of Glacier Creek above Girdwood. The State, as part of its National Forest Community Grant land selections, has selected approximately 23,000 acres from Chugach National Forest in this area. More than 7,000 acres have already been transferred to state ownership. The Municipality of Anchorage is eligible to receive 1,000 acres of land from the State as part of its municipal entitlement.

Because of the need to establish compatible and complementary management plans and policies between the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and the Municipality, the development of the **Girdwood Area Plan** was undertaken as part of a jointly coordinated planning effort between the two governments. As such, the State's **Turnagain Arm Management Plan** should be viewed as a companion document which identifies the management policies for state lands.



Upper portion of Girdwood valley and mountain headwall.

The development of these plans evolved through a series of activities shown in Figure 1. Throughout the planning process, much data gathering and sharing of information took place among local residents, federal, state and municipal officials, professional consultants, and other interested parties. Through surveys, workshops, and public meetings, people expressed their individual and collective concerns about how future development should and should not occur in the Girdwood area.

As part of the planning process, the potential for future tourism/resort/recreational development as the main economic force in the valley was analyzed, as were the resulting implications for employment, population, and housing demand. Subsequent analyses identified and evaluated various future land use development patterns, taking into consideration the current land use configuration, environmental constraints, and existing public infrastructure. The land use alternatives were also based upon varying levels of resort activity and region-wide growth.

Following extensive public review and comment on the land use alternatives and their related impacts, a citizen advisory board provided additional guidance in the final preparation of this Plan and the State's **Turnagain Arm Management Plan**.

This Plan is based on the assumptions that the resident population of Girdwood will continue to grow, that the primary economic base will continue to be the tourism/resort/recreational industry, and that resort/recreational facilities will eventually expand to the upper valley area. The Plan recognizes the need for additional year-round recreational activities and general commercial space to support residential growth.

Environmental/open space recommendations are included in the Plan to acknowledge both the physical limitations imposed upon development in the Girdwood valley, as well as the importance of the preservation of natural spaces to the economic success and livability of this mountain resort community.

The Plan recognizes the importance of ensuring that a proper facility support system is expanded in order to maintain the expected development patterns and community/resort activities. And finally, implementation measures are identified, and the relationships between this Plan and other municipal plans are described.

Key implementation measures noted in the Plan include revisions to the current land use regulatory system in place in Girdwood, policies and practices concerning the disposal of municipal lands, and development and use of the Request for Proposals (RFP) process to attract new resort/recreational development.

Included at the end of this document is an Appendix which contains the Girdwood Community Survey, a summary of the results of the Girdwood Community Vision Forum (a consensus-building workshop sponsored by the Four Valleys Community School held in conjunction with this planning process), and a selective list of references.

