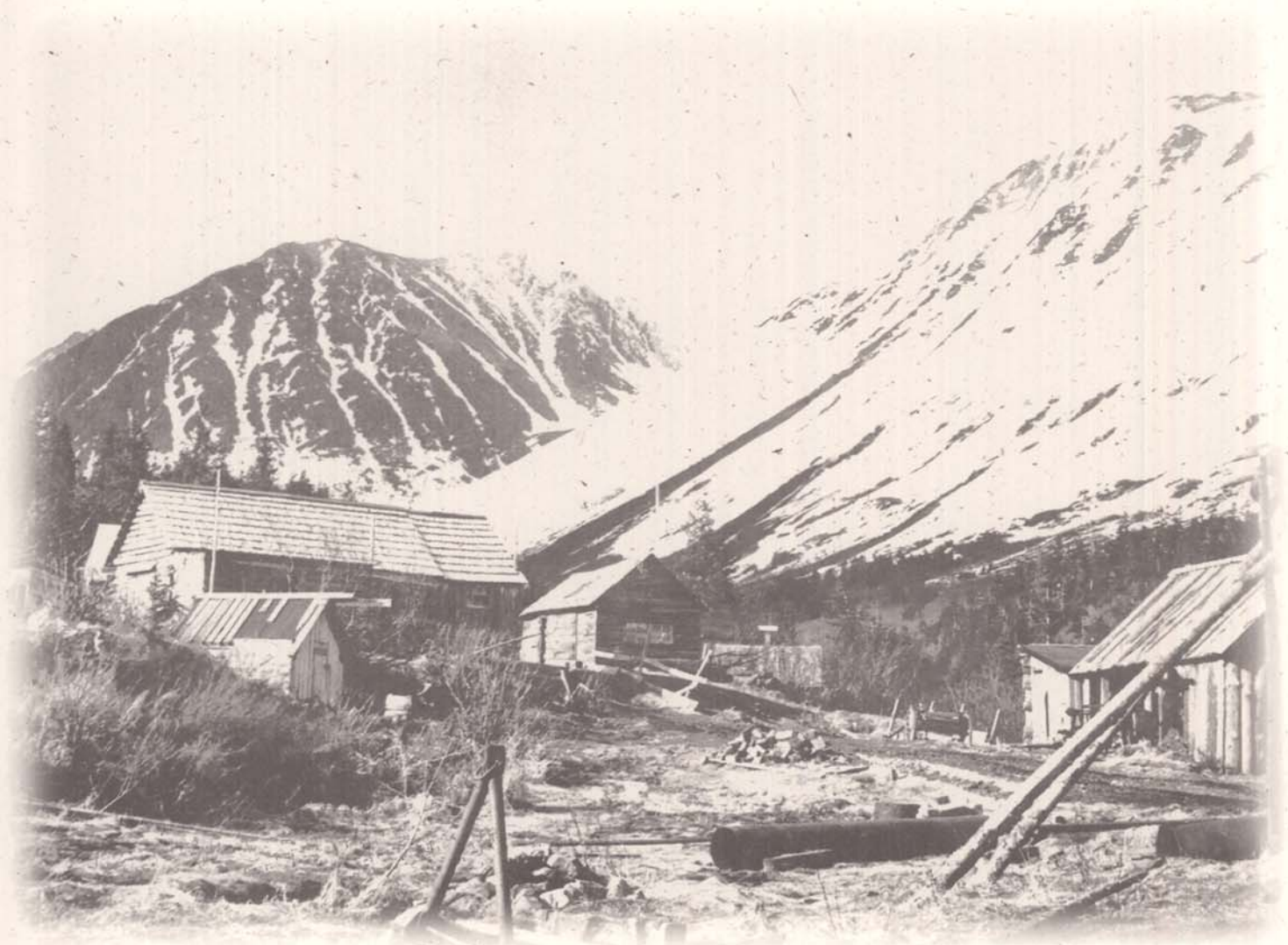


Chapter 5
*Community Attitudes
and Aspirations*



CROW CREEK MINE BEGAN AS A COMMERCIAL GOLD MINING OPERATION JUST BEFORE THE TURN OF THE CENTURY AND WAS STILL OPERATING IN 1940, THE DATE OF THIS SCENE OF THE MINING CAMP. TODAY, THE CROW CREEK MINE IS PRESERVED AS A NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE WHERE RECREATIONAL PLACER MINING IS STILL PRODUCING GOLD.



Taking a walk.

Girdwood residents expressed their attitudes about future community and resort development in the Girdwood area in numerous public meetings and community surveys. Additionally, many residents stated their views in correspondence to public agencies. In January, 1993, Girdwood property owners (residents and non-resident owners alike) were surveyed on their attitudes toward Girdwood's future development. Responses were tallied separately for primary and secondary residents.*

The features that primary residents most liked about the Girdwood area were its small-town atmosphere (64 percent), followed by the natural environment (13 percent). Access to skiing and other outdoor recreation (5 percent) and distance from Anchorage (5 percent) were also cited. Second-home owners most often cited Girdwood's skiing and other outdoor recreation (44 percent), followed by its small-town atmosphere (20 percent) and its natural environment (13 percent).

Primary and secondary residents value various features of the Girdwood area differently. Full-time residents care most about the quality of daily life. Second-home owners most enjoy the recreational assets. The principal preferences of primary and secondary residents are different but not irreconcilable. Indeed, many primary and secondary residents share a common regard for Girdwood's small-town atmosphere and natural environment.

Primary and secondary residents hold different attitudes toward future resort expansion and different reasons for favoring resort development. Girdwood residents as a group expressed some uncertainty, with 34 percent favorable, 24 percent unfavorable, and 41 percent of mixed opinion. Among Girdwood residents who favored future resort expansion, the most commonly cited reason was economic development, followed by improved ski amenities and

*A complete description of the Girdwood Area Survey and its results are contained in the Appendix. These survey results suggest that, if resort expansion can be developed without impairing Girdwood's small-town atmosphere as perceived by residents, it may be feasible to frame a development strategy that satisfies the foremost concerns of both full-time residents and recreational homeowners.

increased property values. No full-time residents favored resort expansion for the sake of increased tourism and recreation. Secondary residents were decidedly more favorable (71 percent) toward development; 23 percent held mixed opinions; and few were unfavorable (5 percent). Among secondary residents who favored resort development, the most commonly expressed reason was improved skiing and amenities, followed by economic development and increased tourism and recreation.

Shortly after the survey, the Four Valleys Community School, Inc., sponsored two Girdwood Vision Consensus-Building Forums that focused on three questions about the Girdwood community. Results correlated very closely with community survey findings. The three questions and the most numerous responses were as follows.

1. Question:
What do you like most about Girdwood?

Responses:
Small-town lifestyle; scenic beauty; low pollution levels; wilderness setting; recreational environment/opportunities.

2. Question:
What do you think needs to be done to improve Girdwood?

Responses:
Local control of planning & zoning process; multi-purpose community center; improved recreational facilities; improved/expanded trails; planned town center; natural gas availability; greater political autonomy.

3. Question:
As Girdwood grows and develops as a community, what are the major concerns that need to be addressed?

Responses:
Loss of small-town atmosphere; air pollution; noise pollution; rapid growth; local control/autonomy; zoning enforcement; affordable housing; infrastructure costs.

The results of these two community surveys also closely resembled community attitudes toward earlier resort development proposals (Leonard Lane Associates 1984; Ott Water Engineers, Inc., 1987). This consistency over time indicates that these community attitudes are longstanding and deeply rooted. Thus, the community overall has held a consistent and balanced attitude toward ongoing ski resort development and town growth. Many of the same attitudes have been expressed about Alyeska Resort's recent expansion program.

Overall, community residents did not seem strongly predisposed or polarized about the issue of future resort expansion. Rather, residents seemed most immediately concerned with the quality of community life. Additional resort development seems acceptable as long as specific concerns about community life are addressed. Community diversity is valued, but concerns were expressed at public meetings that, with additional large-scale ski resort development, the visitor industry might overwhelmingly dominate the local economy and community life.

Following are four broad goals with respective general policies/strategies which reflect the community consensus reached in the community surveys, local public meetings, and the correspondence record from residents regarding proposed developments in Girdwood:

- *Perpetuate Girdwood's small-town atmosphere.*
- *Preserve the valley's natural environment.*
- *Provide a variety of year-round recreational opportunities.*
- *Provide facilities and services to maintain and enhance the quality of community life.*

These goals were used in the development of Girdwood's Land Use Plan. They can also be used as general standards for evaluating major development proposals, and as a basis to identify and propose appropriate mitigation measures for adverse community impacts.

GOAL: *Perpetuate Girdwood's Small-Town Atmosphere*

- Minimize induced population growth from resort expansion by recruiting temporary/transient employees for the resort workforce during seasonal peak, and require provision of employee housing for a certain portion of these resort workers.
- Phase development of new residential tracts to maintain neighborhood scale; perpetuate the predominately low-density, single-family character of Girdwood's resident community; situate multi-family housing in dispersed pockets with higher density development located within the resort areas, or next to major commercial centers.
- Expand the town core as a commercial and community center.
- Dispose of Heritage Land Bank land intended for community development in keeping with community and land use objectives as outlined in this Plan, and any subsequent revisions.
- Reduce vehicular congestion through efficient land use, local circulation patterns, and adequate parking.
- Limit industrial land uses to community construction and maintenance-related functions.
- Provide suitably located visitor services and amenities; minimize visitor intrusions into residential neighborhoods.
- Protect visual quality of the Alyeska Highway corridor; incorporate aesthetically attractive design features into man-made environment.

GOAL: *Preserve Girdwood's Natural Environment*

- Establish permanent trail corridors and public open spaces.
- Designate Four Corners as protected public open space. Excepting transportation and utility crossings, limit use of open space area to recreation.
- Avoid placement of buildings intended for human occupancy in natural hazard areas.

GOAL: *Provide a Variety of Year-round Recreational Opportunities*

- Reserve appropriate land areas that are suitable for various recreational opportunities for the benefit of local residents and visitors alike.
- Improve resident pedestrian access to local trails, recreational facilities, and natural areas. Establish a system of neighborhood parks with pedestrian access from nearby residential areas.

GOAL: *Provide Facilities and Services to Maintain and Enhance the Quality of Community Life*

- Schedule water, sewer, and road improvements for community expansion.
- Place all new telephone, cable, and electrical distribution lines underground.
- Develop a joint-use, multi-purpose community center for recreational, cultural, and civic functions.
- Provide a range of public indoor, as well as outdoor, recreational facilities.
- Build new public safety facilities for police and fire services; purchase new fire-fighting equipment.
- Explore complementary shared use of new community and resort facilities.
- Implement shuttle-bus service to connect the resort facilities with each other and with Girdwood commercial districts.