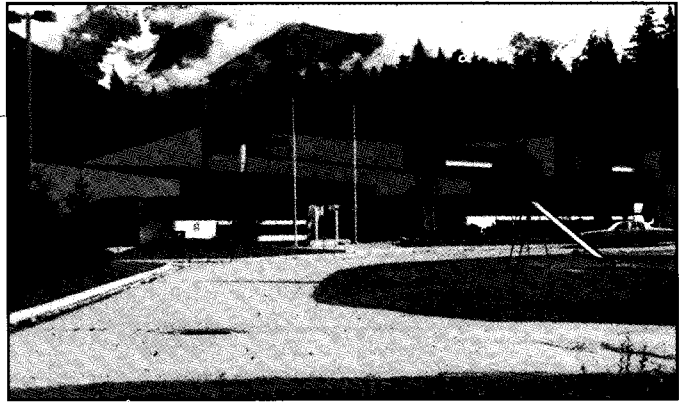


# *P* Chapter 8. *ublic Facility Plan*



By 1962, Chair 1 had been built by the newly established Alyeska Resort, whisking a line of skiers from the mountain base to the upper slopes of Alyeska.



*Girdwood school.*

*a*

s a small community, Girdwood currently has a limited range of public facilities. As the area grows, it will be necessary to improve and expand the level which currently exists. Determination of actual need will have to consider visitor demands, as well as those of the local residents. Following are descriptions of the existing facilities and services, and recommendations for improvements.

### *Administrative Building*

Girdwood was an incorporated city between 1961 and 1975. Between the time following the 1964 earthquake and until the city was dissolved with the unification of the Municipality of Anchorage, city offices shared space with the community library in an old school building, currently occupied by the Little Bears Playhouse and located off the Alyeska Highway near its intersection with Glacier Creek Drive.

Following unification, the Girdwood Valley Service Area was created. The powers of street construction and maintenance, solid waste collection, fire protection, and parks and recreation were specifically required to be exercised within the service area and an elected Girdwood Valley Service Area Board of Supervisors was established. The five-member Board of Supervisors meets once a month in the Little Bears Playhouse building.

The Little Bears Playhouse has been serving the community as a meeting space for many years. In many ways, it has lent itself well to providing a relaxed informal atmosphere that is conducive to running the civic affairs of a small town.

As a result of its size and function as a child care center, however, it has become ill-suited for many public meetings of the Girdwood Board of Supervisors. The space is not large enough for many meetings, seating is limited, and the acoustics make it difficult for the public to follow the Board's deliberations.

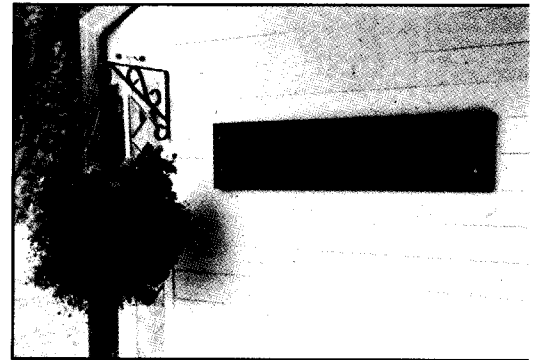
There is also no office area available to the Girdwood Board of Supervisors. Community development and visitor activities will likely increase in the future, requiring more time and attention from the Board. Ultimately, the Board will need full-time assistance to address the various issues coming before them. A small staff will require administrative office space and proper equipment, and the Board will need larger and better accommodations for handling public meetings.

## *Cultural Facilities*

### **LIBRARY**

The Scott and Wesley Gerrish Library has been located in the Girdwood Elementary School on Hightower Road since the school was built in 1981. Before that time, local library services were provided from the community's original school, a structure now occupied by the Little Bears Playhouse. The library joined the Anchorage library system in 1976 and is currently operated by the Municipality's Department of Cultural and Recreational Services.

The library occupies approximately 1,300 feet of floor space which houses a combined circulation area and children's room, stacks, a reading room, a staff office/lounge/workroom and bathrooms. The library is open 33 hours per week from Tuesday through Saturday. It currently houses between 12,000 and 13,000 books, plus close to 5,000 records/tapes, as well as periodicals, compact discs and microfiche materials. Total circulation in 1991 was 16,381 items compared with 14,844 in 1990 and 15,641 in 1989. Children's picture books and adult popular books are the most popular items. The facility is staffed by a full-time non-professional librarian and two part-time clerks.



On average, close to 1,000 patrons use the library each month, with October being the peak month and the summer months of June and July being the low months. Saturday patrons include a high proportion of ski spouses and weekenders. Special programs offered by the library include pre-school story time which is offered year-round, plus a summer reading program. In addition, a grade school story time is offered during the school year for first and second graders, and the library is heavily used as a supplement to the small elementary school library.

Although the school building is in generally good condition, the library lacks adequate space, particularly for a separate reference room and space for computerized reference equipment. It also lacks handicap accessibility in terms of aisle and shelf use.

Ultimately, the space in the school used by the library will be needed for school use. With the expected population growth in residents and visitors, a larger facility is needed in a more accessible and centrally located part of the community.

# Public Safety Functions

## **POLICE PROTECTION**

The Municipality of Anchorage does not provide police services in the Turnagain Arm area. As a result, police protection is provided by the Alaska State Troopers. A trooper has been based in Girdwood since 1972. In addition to Girdwood and Portage, the trooper serves a wide area extending between Mile 75 (Ingram Creek) and Mile 95 (McHugh Creek) of the Seward Highway; the western portion of Cook Inlet, including the Tyonek and Beluga areas; and western Prince William Sound, excluding Whittier. Prisoners are transported to Anchorage.

The trooper operates out of his house and from his patrol car. Altogether, he is responsible for about 700 case reports per year. Traffic enforcement and motor vehicle accidents are the primary problems in the area, followed by burglaries/thefts. Junked vehicles are also considered a problem. Girdwood is known as a "party town," although problems associated with unruly parties have reportedly declined in recent years. The trooper also assists in search-and-rescue missions in the service area.

The trooper has an excellent communications system which is used to contact headquarters, the military, school buses, and snow plows. However, the lack of formal office facilities is seen as a problem. The Alaska State Troopers are interested in establishing a public safety building which also would house a second trooper, a park ranger and Fish and Wildlife officers. Logically, such a facility would be located adjacent to the Seward Highway. However, no plans have yet been developed.

There have been recent efforts to extend the Anchorage Police Service area to Girdwood, and to phase out the role of the State Trooper in providing public safety services in the valley. Although it is currently not popular in the community, there will eventually be a need to increase the level of police service in the community. This plan does not address the issue of who is best positioned to provide the service, but notes that there will be a need to address community-wide public safety separate from the Seward Highway and the rest of the Turnagain Arm area. Consideration should be given to reserving space for a centrally located facility that can include inter-agency communications, and a small holding area.

## **FIRE PROTECTION**

Fire protection services are provided by the Girdwood Volunteer Fire Department in the Girdwood Valley Service Area.

The Girdwood fire station is a four-bay structure located south of the Alyeska Highway at the intersection of Glacier Creek Drive and Quartz Avenue. It was built in 1978 and is staffed by a fire chief and 30 volunteers. In addition to housing firefighting and emergency medical equipment, the building includes a kitchen, a small sleeping room and bathroom facilities.

Funding for the Fire Chief is equally split between the Girdwood Valley Service Area and Areawide Emergency Medical Services. The Anchorage Fire Department assists in the training of volunteers. However, much of the training is done in-house by the Girdwood volunteers themselves and is supplemented by personnel from the State Fire Training Division.

Firefighting equipment includes three 1981 pumper-tankers, each with a carrying capacity of 1,750 gallons and a pumping capacity of 750 gallons per minute. However, the fire station is too small to house all equipment and a reserve ambulance and a pumper-tanker are instead stored in an adjacent community garage. Although there have been no major fires in the Girdwood Valley in recent years, the Girdwood Volunteer Fire Department responded to 121 fire calls in 1991.

The Girdwood Valley Service Area has an Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of 7 for commercial structures and 8 for residential properties. Water is derived from hydrants associated with the community water system. Areas not on the community system are served by a tanker shuttle.

There are two major problems associated with fire protection in the Girdwood Valley Service Area, one associated with the fire station and the other with equipment. The existing fire station is too small to handle all of the existing fire protection and emergency medical services equipment. The facility also lacks a training room. In addition, the building has structural flaws. It has no heat and there are no drains in the floor of the equipment room.

The lack of a ladder truck is another potentially serious problem. The Department's longest ladder is 35 feet, which is inadequate in view of a recent trend to multi-family structures and with construction of the new Alyeska Resort hotel. The Municipality of Anchorage has made the acquisition of a quint fire apparatus a high priority for legislative funding. The new quint fire apparatus would include a 65- to 75-foot elevating ladder and a 1500-gallon-per-minute pump. However, a new truck cannot be acquired until space is available to house it.

#### **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

Emergency medical services (EMS) are provided areawide throughout the Municipality. From the Girdwood fire station, these services are provided not only to the Girdwood area but also to the area between Mile 75 and Mile 100 of the Seward Highway.

Emergency medical equipment includes two Advanced Life Support ambulances, one a 1990 model and the other a 1988 chassis with a 1973 ambulance module; a 1979 rescue vehicle; and an inflatable raft with an outboard motor. This equipment is housed at the Girdwood fire station except for the reserve ambulance, which is stored in an adjacent community garage.

Except for the fire chief, all emergency medical services personnel in the Girdwood area are volunteers. The department is trained and certified in advanced life support; EMT-I, II and III (EMT III's are qualified to use defibrillator equipment); CPR; and first responder-hazardous materials. The department averages about 190 EMS calls per year. Patients are transported to hospitals in Anchorage.

Aside from periodic additions and upgrading of equipment, the major unmet emergency medical services need in the Girdwood area is related to a need for a civic/public safety building capable of handling all EMS equipment and accommodating EMS training activities. Another problem is related to Girdwood's location 40 miles south of Anchorage which results in relatively long travel times for transporting patients. Despite continued improvements to the Seward Highway, it is not anticipated that this situation will change significantly in the future.

**PROPOSED JOINT COMMUNITY FACILITY**

In response to a variety of community facility needs, the Municipality is in the process of having engineering and design work done for the renovation of the existing Girdwood Fire Station and other proposed facility additions. The proposed improvements include renovations to the existing fire station to bring it up to current code compliance, an addition to the existing fire station of approximately 2,500 square feet for the anticipated quint fire apparatus (combined ladder-pumper-tanker truck), and additional vehicles.

The design work will also include a 4,000 square foot library, and 2,000 square foot community meeting area. The new library and community meeting room are intended to replace the current substandard facilities with larger ones that better meet the needs of the community. The new facilities are planned to be co-located on the site of the existing fire station and a portion of land immediately to the west that currently includes a little league ballfield.

When these facilities are constructed (funds are not yet available), they will be a significant addition to the community. However, these improvements will not address all community facility needs.

Given the central location in the heart of the community with access to Alyeska Highway, land in this area should be reserved for additional or expanded community facilities. The four lots between Glacier Creek Drive and Glacier Creek should be retained for future community use. In addition, two acres from the northernmost portion of the "squirrel cage" subdivision should also be retained. Sufficient land area should be reserved for an integrated siting and design of new complementary facilities to serve the community.

Such uses may include a police facility, additional parking area, and/or expanded community center that may include kitchen facilities, historical/art display area, recreation center, and administrative offices. Eventually, the older structures housing the Little Bears Playhouse and fire/EMS vehicles may be replaced with expanded child care and recreational facilities.

*Health Services*

Due to the small size of the community, Girdwood has few formal medical or dental services. At present, the Girdwood Health Center offers the only formal medical services in the valley. Located in the Girdwood Mall, the Girdwood Health Center offers a full range of diagnostic and treatment services by a family practice physician, as well as a chiropractic physician.

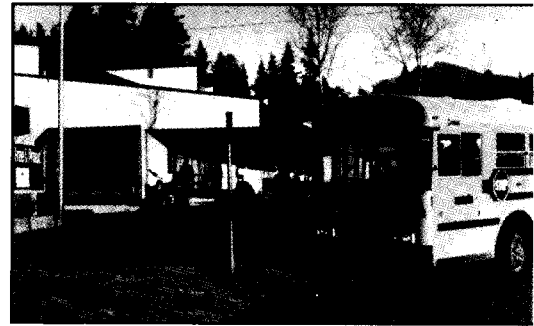
Girdwood also has part-time dental offices and a holistic healing enterprise. Girdwood's projected population, combined with its proximity to Anchorage, will not support a hospital facility in the area during the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, it is likely that additional medical and dental offices will open to support growing numbers of residents and visitors.

## Education

As in other areas of the Municipality, educational services in the Turnagain Arm area are provided by the Anchorage School District. An elementary/junior high school housing students from kindergarten through the eighth grade is located in Girdwood and serves students from throughout the Turnagain Arm area. However, students from Rainbow, Bird and Indian have the option of attending classes at either the Girdwood or Oceanview elementary schools. Approximately 40 high school students from the area attend Dimond High School in Anchorage.

### EXISTING SCHOOL FACILITIES

The Girdwood School occupies a relatively remote 27.8-acre site north of the Alyeska Highway, at the end of Hightower Road. The present school was completed in 1981. It replaced earlier facilities located nearer the Seward Highway, one on Monarch Mine Road now utilized by the U.S. Forest Service, while the other was moved from the Old Townsite area and functioned as a community library for a number of years. It is now located off the Alyeska Highway near its intersection with Glacier Creek Drive and is used by the Little Bears Playhouse and as a meeting place for the Girdwood Valley Service Area Board of Supervisors.



*Girdwood school.*

Since the school was constructed, the only significant modification was a four-room addition in 1984. Currently, the school has nine classrooms (seven for elementary and two for junior high). Other school amenities include a small library, an art/science room, a multi-purpose room, a community schools office, a nurse's room, custodial closets, a kitchen and staff office/reception space. As noted previously, the Scott and Wesley Gerrish Library is located within the school.

The Girdwood School is staffed by a principal, five certified elementary school teachers, two junior high school teachers, a half-time kindergarten teacher and a half-time librarian. Some special programs, such as music and art, are provided at the school by itinerant teachers from Anchorage, while gifted students are periodically bused to town for their program needs.

At the end of September, 1993, the Girdwood School had a total enrollment of 163 students, including kindergarten. (See Table 10.) Girdwood School has a program capacity of 189 students (21 students per classroom), which puts its utilization at 86 percent of capacity. Unlike many Anchorage area schools, Girdwood School is not overcrowded at this time. Furthermore, the school building is in very good condition and the size of the school site is well in excess of ASD minimum standards.

### ENROLLMENT TRENDS AND FORECAST

Including kindergarten students, overall enrollment in the Girdwood School rose from 91 to 163 students between 1979 and 1993, an increase of almost 79 percent. Rates of growth have been uneven but the September, 1993 enrollment is the highest recorded during that period.

**Table 10**  
**School Enrollment**  
**Elementary/Junior High School**  
**1979/80 -- 1993/94**

School Year	Enrollment
1979/80	91
1980/81	109
1981/82	131
1982/83	148
1983/84	110
1984/85	111
1985/86	109
1986/87	125
1987/88	144
1988/89	124
1989/90	123
1990/91	133
1991/92	143
1992/93	150
1993/94	163

Source: Anchorage School District

The Anchorage School District's most recent analysis of student enrollment trends and future projections indicate the current school facility will be sufficient to meet projected enrollment increases through the end of this decade. Table 11 depicts the District's analysis of space requirements at the school.

There is a possibility that actual enrollments could increase beyond what is projected if new employment associated with the new resort hotel brings more permanent residents with school- aged children to the valley than anticipated over the next six years. However, the relocation of the public library would free up space for an additional classroom.

Further classroom additions will ultimately be needed. The Anchorage School District should monitor their projections closely and schedule a new addition at least three years in advance of need to allow time for funding, design and construction to occur.

Girdwood will never reach enrollments to meet Anchorage School District standards for a high school. However, the School District may eventually build a facility for high school students that is less than its standard. It may be more in scale with some of its secondary alternative schools in Anchorage which typically range from 200-400 students, or even less.

This Plan includes an additional 12 acres of land classified as Public Lands and Institutions next to the existing school property. The land is located north and west of the existing school, and is intended to be used for a secondary school and physical education/sports recreation facilities.

**Table 11**  
**Analysis of Elementary Space Requirements (K-8)**  
**Girdwood**  
**1993 -1999**

Year	Classrooms	Program Capacity	Projected Membership	Add'l Students Program Could Accommodate	Rooms Needed for Membership	Classrooms Available	Capacity Utilized
1993-94	9	189	163	26	8	1	86%
1994-95	9	189	168	21	8	1	89%
1995-96	9	189	175	14	8	1	93%
1996-97	9	189	176	13	8	1	93%
1997-98	9	189	177	12	8	1	94%
1998-99	9	189	178	11	8	1	94%
1999-00	9	189	179	10	9	0	95%

## *Parks and Recreation*

The provision of a variety of recreational facilities is an essential element of good community development. In the Girdwood area, more than in most Alaska communities, not only must local recreation demands be satisfied but also those of tourists and other visitors. To some extent, the same facilities can serve both groups. However, for young children and teenagers, special recreational facilities must be provided.

### **REGIONAL PARKS AND RECREATIONAL AMENITIES**

Girdwood has several public and private recreational amenities which attract recreational enthusiasts and other visitors from outside the community, as well as being available to local residents.



Alyeska Resort is the State's premier skiing area, attracting in excess of 150,000 skier visits each year. The presence of ski amenities is the primary reason for the large number of week-end and other temporary residents in Girdwood, a significant proportion of whom have invested in second homes in the community. Skiing was also a motivating force for many residents who chose to live in the community year-round. In addition, Alyeska is a popular summer attraction, with 96,200 visitors counted in the summer of 1989.

The western edge of the Girdwood valley abuts Chugach State Park. This 495,000-acre park extends between Turnagain Arm and Knik Arm. It is accessible from the community and offers a wide variety of outdoor recreation experiences, including hiking and wildlife viewing. The northern and eastern edge of the Girdwood valley abuts the Chugach National Forest which also offers a comprehensive range of outdoor recreational opportunities.

The Crow Creek Mine is another local recreation-related attraction. This National Historic Register property offers opportunities for recreational gold panning, viewing old mining buildings and equipment, as well as overnight camping, lodging, and food service. It was visited by an estimated 32,100 people in 1989.

#### **LOCAL PARKS AND RECREATIONAL AMENITIES**

Local parks and recreational services in the Girdwood area are provided by the Municipality's Department of Cultural and Recreational Services, with input from the Girdwood Valley Service Area Board of Supervisors. Municipal park lands include Girdwood Park, California Creek Park, Moose Meadows Park, Girdwood Town Square Park, Girdwood Town Square Buffer Park and 27 parcels within the Alyeska Basin area. Most of these lands have not been formally developed.

Girdwood Park is located off the Alyeska Highway at Glacier Creek Drive. This 2.77-acre park was established in 1966 and formally dedicated as a park in 1984. It includes a fenced play area with playground equipment, two tennis courts, an open grassed area with a volleyball court, picnic tables and a fire pit. The site also includes a former community school/library building which now houses the Little Bears Playhouse; an old fire hall which is still used to house some firefighting/emergency medical services equipment and also serves as a caretaker's residence; and an old community building which is currently used as a pottery studio.



*Children playing in Girdwood Park.*

Girdwood Park is a community asset. Except for the school, this is the only developed playground in the Girdwood area. However, the playground area is too crowded, the tennis courts need re-surfacing and the structures on the property are old and require constant maintenance. Re-surfacing and repairs are planned for the tennis courts and playground improvements are also scheduled.

Although it is not a dedicated park, a ballfield has been established between Girdwood Park and California Creek Park, on the west side of the public safety building property. These lands were withdrawn from the Heritage Land Bank and management authority was transferred to the municipal Parks and Recreation Department in 1988.

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 a covered pavilion. Planned improvements include development of a basketball court and the installation of playground equipment. Parking improvements are also planned.

Moose Meadows Park is located off Arlberg Avenue, north of Aspen Road. This 3.9-acre park covers two tracts which are separated by a platted but undeveloped portion of Alyeska Avenue. In 1989, a soccer field was developed on the eastern tract adjacent to Arlberg Avenue. A well house and a small gravel parking area are also on the property. The remaining area has no site improvements. Future park plans call for development of a playground, plus landscaping and additional parking space.

Girdwood Town Square Park was established in 1965 and dedicated in 1990. It is an 0.82-acre tract in the center of the commercial area of the new Girdwood townsite, between Hightower Road and Holmgren Place and between Lindblad Avenue and Girdwood Place West. Pedestrian access from all four streets is platted, but no amenities have been developed to date. When this area was platted after the 1964 earthquake, it was intended that the park would function as a central community square for a re-established townsite. However, commercial structures surrounding the park face outward toward the street rather than inward. Future plans call for the development of a playground and landscaping at this site.

Girdwood Town Square Buffer Park is also located in the new Girdwood townsite area, between Girdwood Place West and the Alyeska Highway. It was established in 1965 and was dedicated in 1990, except for the eastern 10 feet. The park functions as a buffer between the new townsite area and the Alyeska Highway, and there are no plans for formal improvements.

Finally, there are 27 small park reserves ranging in size from 1,835 to 62,140 square feet within the Alyeska Basin Subdivision. These reserves were established by plats between 1970 and 1974. They are not dedicated park lands, but serve either as buffer strips along Alpine Avenue or as drainageways. There are no plans to develop formal park facilities on any of these lands.

In addition to local parks and park reserve lands, the Girdwood School facilities are available for public use. Recreational amenities at the school include a playground, a playing field for soccer and softball, basketball hoops and a lighted ice hockey rink. The school multi-purpose room is also available for a variety of recreational and civic uses.

The current parks, with existing and planned improvements, are a good base for the community's system of parks and recreational facilities. As the area grows, additional parks and recreational facilities will be needed, particularly at the neighborhood park level. Although adopted in 1987, Volume 3 of the **Anchorage Park, Greenbelt and Recreation Facility Plan** is still very germane in identifying future needs of the community. In particular, it identifies the need for additional parks where there are current deficiencies, as well as where new residential development is anticipated. Parks identified include the following:

- Girdwood School/Community Park,
- Alyeska Basin Neighborhood Park,
- Crow Creek Road Neighborhood Park,
- West Side Neighborhood Park, and
- Virgin Creek Neighborhood Park.

These parks are intended to provide space for active recreational facilities that may include equipped playlots, tennis and basketball courts, and open play fields for soccer and softball. The parks would also include wooded footpaths and benches for passive use.

The parks would range in size from 5-15 acres. The latter three parks are not specifically identified on the Land Use Plan Map. A specific location should be reserved as plans for residential development of the area are prepared prior to any land disposal.

The 1987 Park Plan locates Alyeska Basin Neighborhood Park along the western side of the subdivision near the end of Alpine Way. However, there may be a potential conflict if a new road is needed in the future to connect Seward and Alyeska Highways on the east side of Glacier Creek.

An alternative location for the park may be the southern portion of the remaining undeveloped part of Alyeska Basin Subdivision that is on the north side of Alpine Way. The park, which would include retention of the ephemeral stream and spruce/hemlock grove, could provide recreational amenities to the neighborhood. It could also provide a buffer or transition between the existing residences and any new development that may occur on the remaining undeveloped land.

Acquisition of the park could occur either by fee simple acquisition, or through a land trade with the private land owner. The Heritage Land Bank would be an appropriate vehicle to effectuate such an acquisition.

The community park proposed next to the school could largely be sited on school land. The current school site is 27.8 acres in size, far in excess of its needs. Another 12 acres is designated for school purposes, most notably for a secondary school facility. If additional land is needed, however, it could be made available from adjoining Heritage Land Bank property.

## RECREATIONAL TRAILS

Trails were the earliest form of transportation in the Girdwood area. One of the earliest was the Iditarod Trail, which ran from Turnagain Arm up through the valley to Crow Pass, where it descended to Eagle River and out to Knik Arm. Today, trails serve both a pedestrian transportation and recreational purpose. Trails form integral links in a community as spread out and divided by natural features as Girdwood.

The trail receiving the most recreational use, which is also the major pedestrian transportation link in the community, is the Alyeska Highway Trail. Built during the summers of 1982 and 1983, the trail parallels the Alyeska Highway from south of the railroad to the end of the highway at Alyeska Resort.

The trail is located on the west and north sides of the highway within the right-of-way. The trail is connected to the Old Girdwood Townsite by way of an underpass beneath Alyeska Highway. Future plans call for the trail to be extended to the Seward Highway, and then routed westward along the highway to Chugach State Park.

The Alyeska Highway trail has two paved off-shoots. One extends down Hightower Avenue to the Girdwood School. The other is located along Arlberg Avenue from the end of Alyeska Highway to the new Alyeska Prince Hotel parking area.

One of the most popular and well-known off-road recreational trails is the Winner Creek trail. Developed by the U.S. Forest Service, the trail extends from Alyeska Resort to Winner Creek. At the creek, the trail forks, with one fork going upstream into the upper valley of Winner Creek, and the other going downstream to the confluence with Glacier Creek, in the Four Corners area.

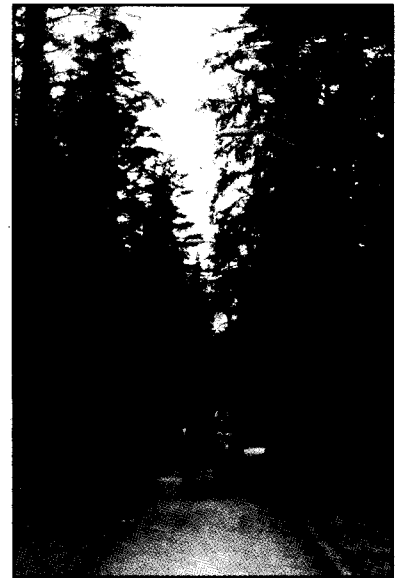
Concern has been expressed for the loss of the lower portion of the trail due to the new resort expansion. This plan proposes a new trailhead be established at the new resort hotel parking lot. A new trail link should be made to connect it with the existing trail. The trail should be protected from any further encroachment due to development.

There are many other unimproved trails throughout the valley which receive a significant amount of use, particularly by local residents who are familiar with the trails. They are generally located along the perimeter of the valley and alongside the creeks.

The one area that receives the largest amount of trail use by both local residents and visitors is that portion of the valley generally located on the east side of Glacier Creek between the existing community and Winner Creek. Several trails extend from the north end of the airstrip and the Moose Meadows to Winner Creek. Hikers, cross-country skiers, skijorers, and dog mushers all use the area quite extensively.

The area is interlaced with a series of small waterways and connecting, open meadows within spruce/hemlock uplands that have made it particularly attractive for recreationists. Some of the most dramatic views of the surrounding mountains can be seen from the open areas. This area, which is classified Recreation Reserve, is viewed as a key component for future year-round visitor recreation as well as local use.

The **Anchorage Trails Plan** (which includes Girdwood) is currently in the process of being revised. The revision will update the current plan, which was adopted in 1985, as well as the trails component of the **Anchorage Park, Greenbelt and Recreation Facility Plan**. Upon adoption, the newly revised **Anchorage Trails Plan** will be a functional component of the Anchorage Comprehensive Plan. As such, it will address the location and type of trails to be established, design standards and policies, and prioritization of improvements.



*Moose Meadows Greenbelt Trail  
along Arlberg Avenue.*

The following policies/guidelines are intended to be interim measures specifically oriented to the Girdwood area until the revised **Anchorage Trails Plan** is adopted. It is further recommended that, to the extent practicable, these policies/ guidelines be made a part of the revised Trails Plan.

1. Official trail corridors are those currently identified in the **Anchorage Trails Plan** and Volume 3 of the **Anchorage Park, Greenbelt and Recreation Facility Plan**. These plans will be superseded by the revised **Anchorage Trails Plan** and the proposed management plan for the Recreation Reserve.

2. Each off-road trail corridor should have a trail and buffer area associated with it. The buffer area should be configured to protect the quality of the experience of the trail user and to minimize negative impacts from adjacent land uses. The dimensions of the buffer should be determined by the following factors:
  - location and proposed use of the trail;
  - type and density of vegetation, characteristics of terrain and other adjoining natural features; and
  - patent notes/restrictions. (Some parcels transferred to the State and the Municipality have public access easements that vary from 0 to 600 feet in width. These easements will prevail unless a formal request is made to modify the dimensions. Any requests to reduce the dimensions must be based upon an on-site evaluation using the previously noted factors.)
3. Prior to the disposal of any public land containing a trail corridor, the location of the trail and buffer area should be located in the field, and recorded as an easement for such use. The easement should be noted on any subdivision plat made of the area.
4. New roadways that are classified as collectors should be designed to include a separated foot/bicycle path.
5. All existing trails should be available for multiple use, except where motorized use is prohibited.
6. Off-road trails should be left primitive or unimproved. Exceptions may be considered for clearing and brushing of downed timber, and to improve drainage that may be causing trail damage.
7. A specific management plan should be prepared for the Recreation Reserve area noted on the Land Use Plan Map. The management plan should identify existing trails and other potential recreational uses. Most trails are considered for multiple use at the present time. However, the management plan should recognize the potential for future competing uses and conflicts and identify a means for resolving them. The plan should also include a relocation of the trailhead in the clear zone at the north end of the Girdwood airstrip.

## *Utilities*

### **WATER**

The provision of adequate quantities of water to all major developed areas is essential for good community development. In Girdwood, which experiences large daily variations in population during the winter and summer tourist seasons, the demands of part-time residents and visitors must also be accommodated.

Piped water services in the Girdwood area are provided by the Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU) and by Glacier Utilities. AWWU provides service east of Glacier Creek, while Glacier Utilities serves part of the new townsite area and an adjoining trailer court located immediately west of Glacier Creek. Elsewhere, water is provided by private wells.

The present AWWU service area includes two formerly private water systems, the Alyeska Lodge and the Alyeska Basin Subdivision systems, plus a new area to the north which takes in the new Alyeska Prince Hotel site and adjoining lands controlled by the resort and the Municipality. The former Alyeska Lodge system was operated by Alyeska Utilities, Inc., and was built during the mid-1960's to serve the lodge and the adjoining Alyeska Subdivision. The water source for this system was a well with a reported capacity of 400 gallons per minute located in what is now Moose Meadows Park. The former Alyeska Basin Subdivision system was operated by Cherrier, King and Cherrier, the original subdivision owner/developer. This subdivision was served by a well with a reported capacity of 200 gallons per minute.

Both private water systems were plagued with problems relating to water quality, inadequately sized lines, poor construction and lack of hydrants. They were acquired by AWWU in the fall of 1990 and in the spring of 1991. Following acquisition, AWWU drilled two new wells northeast of the airport and added a one-million-gallon water storage reservoir. In addition, AWWU has replaced many lines, installed fire hydrants, and established pressure reducing stations. The upgraded system went into service in October, 1991.

As of September, 1992, the AWWU system had a total of 461 water connections, of which 419 were classed as residential and another 33 were classed as metered residential. The remaining connections were commercial, only one of which was metered. In 1991, the average daily water production for the system was 200,000 gallons per day. This is well within the 600,000-gallons-per-day capacity of the well serving the system. However, Girdwood does not experience consistent water demands. Peak flows occur on weekends during the winter ski season. Higher flows during the week in the winter are believed to result from owners of second homes leaving their taps running to keep the pipes from freezing. Unfortunately, information on peak flows is sketchy since there are few metered users.

A separate small piped water system in Girdwood was developed after the 1964 earthquake by the former City of Girdwood to serve the then newly established townsite area. This system was later extended to serve a trailer court on Hightower Road. The system is operated by Glacier Utilities and is essentially a user-operated system that contracts for maintenance. It has approximately 35 connections, 1 hydrant and is served by a well with a reported capacity of 500 gallons per minute.

The 1993 **Anchorage Water Master Plan** update has recently been completed, and includes an evaluation of Girdwood's existing public water system. It also contains a number of recommendations for expanding and upgrading the system to address current problems, as well as future water demand.

The water master plan identifies major capital improvements, to include the development of additional water supply, reservoir storage and system extensions to serve the entire community. The plan notes the proposed water system for Girdwood is flexible enough to accommodate various phasing strategies.

### **Water Supply**

The master plan recommends a new well supply be developed in the vicinity of the existing sewer treatment plant in the lower part of the valley. The new well capacity should be at least 600 gallons per minute. The purpose would be to provide enough water to the community system to meet the peak day demand for the next 25 years; to fill a new reservoir to be located on the eastern side of the valley; and to provide redundancy in the water system in the event that service from the existing wells at the north end of the airport is disrupted.

The vicinity of the wastewater treatment plant offers considerable advantages as a site for a new well source. The site has access, power supply, and proximity to chemical handling and storage facilities. It's located between Glacier and California Creek drainages on alluvial deposits and offers good potential for development of a high producing well. The site is also suitably located for interconnection with transmission mains feeding the east and west sides of the valley.

### ***Water Storage***

The master plan recommends that an additional above-ground reservoir of one million gallons capacity be located at the southern end of Timberline Drive, and be connected to both the Alyeska Basin Subdivision water system, as well as to the new well supply near the wastewater treatment plant.

The most critical criteria for locating the reservoir is elevation. The reservoir must be above the 405-foot elevation. The only practical place is in the vicinity of the southern end of Timberline Drive. Areas at the 405-foot elevation on the west side of the valley are on the inaccessible and avalanche-prone mountain side.

Prior to construction, the water reservoir will go through siting and design processes that will involve local review. AWWU will look at site and design alternatives which minimize impacts on the surrounding area.

The recommended storage volume will be needed in order to have sufficient reserve in the water system for fire protection, and to moderate or equalize water pressure throughout the service area.

### ***Water Transmission and Distribution***

The east side of the valley is wholly served by AWWU. However, the west side of the valley, excepting the new townsite area, continues to rely on individual wells. Much of the existing development and any new development will likely need community water service.

There are two viable options for providing water service to the west side of the valley.

- One option is to first establish a new well supply near the wastewater treatment plant and expand the transmission and distribution system from there to the lower part of the valley, such as the old townsite area and Jewel and Monarch Mine Road area. Eventually, the system could be extended up Alyeska Highway and link with the current system, which could be extended westward across Glacier Creek at the new townsite area.
- The second option would be to extend the existing system across Glacier Creek at Alyeska Highway and continue down the highway to the lower valley. Along the way, new lines could be extended to the new townsite and Crow Creek Road areas.

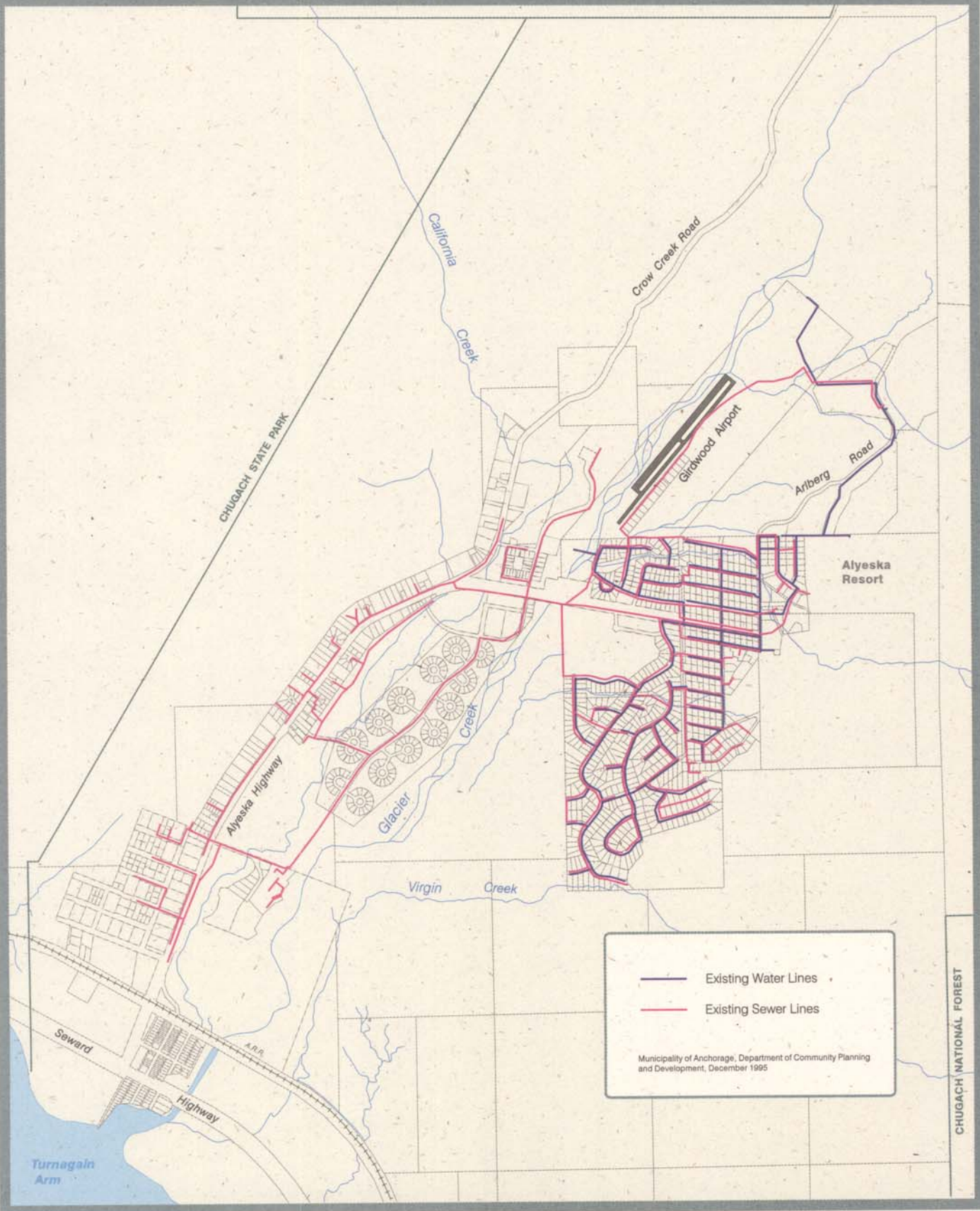
Both water transmission options will eventually lead to the same result -- a looped system serving the entire community. However, each option has its advantages and disadvantages, depending on how and when each area needs to be served.

A significant advantage of first expanding from the existing system rather than starting a new system on the west side is that the reservoir capacity is already in place to offer adequate

# Existing Public Sewer and Water Systems



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mile





reserve for fire flow and pressure equalization. Connection to a new Alyeska Basin Subdivision reservoir would be required for a new west valley well source in order for that system to provide the same degree of water service.

The need for a water service line extension from the existing system to the Glacier-Winner Creek area is unknown at this time. However, if it is needed, a new pressure zone will have to be created, which may likely require additional water storage. The potential need for the extension of water service could be made in conjunction with consideration of any development proposals for that area.

The water master plan for Girdwood identifies how to achieve a community-wide water system that is capable of producing a sufficient supply of water to meet projected peak demands. The plan also acknowledges the policy of the Municipality that any actions taken to implement it through capital improvement programming be consistent with the Girdwood Area Plan.

### **SEWER**

As with water, an adequate sewer system serving all major developed areas, together with sewage treatment, is essential for good community development. This is especially important in the Girdwood valley where poor soil conditions and high water tables often limit the effectiveness of septic tanks.

The existing gravity flow sewer system was constructed by AWWU and put into operation in 1977/78. The system presently has one pump station, located on the east side of Glacier Creek. As of September, 1992, there were 582 sewer connections, all but 20 of which were classed as residential. Sewer service is available throughout most of the Girdwood valley, including the new Alyeska Prince Hotel site, although many residents continue to rely on individual septic systems. The only major areas not served are the old Girdwood townsite, portions of the Monarch Mine Road to Agostino Mine Road neighborhood, and north of the Double Musky on Crow Creek Road.

Sewage is treated at the Girdwood wastewater treatment plant which occupies an 8.9-acre site at the eastern end of Ruane Road. Here, wastes are screened, filtered, aerated and clarified. Liquid sludge is hauled to Point Woronzof, while treated effluent is discharged into Glacier Creek under a state permit. A 2.6-acre percolation pond used to dispose of secondary effluent from the plant is no longer in use.

Normal winter sewage flows average 400,000 gallons per day, while normal summer flows average 250,000 gallons per day. However, the Girdwood area does not experience consistent daily sewage flows for two main reasons. First, the community has large daily fluctuations in population. This is at its most extreme on winter weekends when snow conditions are good for skiing and many more skiers are present. Fluctuations also occur during the summer tourist season. Second, and more serious, the system experiences severe inflow and infiltration problems resulting primarily from the lack of a storm sewer system. These problems are most severe during periods of high snowmelt and/or precipitation, or at break-up when extreme surface run-off conditions are compounded by high groundwater tables and the location of many manholes in low-lying areas. At such times, peak flows can average as high as 1.2 million gallons per day and threaten the capability of the treatment plant.

AWWU anticipates the wastewater treatment plant will be operating at or near capacity in the near future. However, design work is currently being undertaken for planned improvements at the facility, which will boost its capacity by 30 percent. The plant expansion is planned for construction in 1996 at an estimated cost of \$2.5 million.

AWWU is currently having the **Anchorage Wastewater Master Plan** updated, to include the Girdwood area. The plan will investigate ways to resolve the major needs of the system and, in particular, the reduction of infiltration and inflow of ground and surface water.

The size and capacity of the existing collection system, the system of pipes that collect the sewage and deliver it to the treatment plant, is adequate to handle the increase in wastewater resulting from the projected growth that is assumed in this Plan. However, new extensions will be needed to provide service to new development areas. The master plan update will investigate how to best provide the needed extensions.

There are a few existing areas that are also in need of the sewer service. Efforts are being undertaken to extend sewer service to the old townsite area between the Seward Highway and Alaska Railroad. The service area also includes a small portion of the undeveloped area on the west side of Alyeska Highway across from the old townsite.

Another area of existing development which is planned for sewer service is the Monarch Mine Road to Agostino Mine Road neighborhood that is over the ridge crest just west of Alyeska Highway and north of the U.S. Forest Service facilities. Both of these areas contain some of the oldest subdivided lots in the valley.

Experience in the valley has shown that the area's wet climate coupled with its soil and groundwater conditions does not make the standard on-site septic system a reliable way to handle wastewater disposal. Consequently, it is the general policy of this Plan that any new development in the valley that requires wastewater disposal should, to the extent practicable, be connected to the public sewerage system. Exceptions should be documented with clear findings of fact that a suitable alternative will work.

### **ELECTRIC POWER**

Electric power has been provided to the Girdwood area by Chugach Electric since the 1950's. The community is fed via a 24.9-kilovolt line-to-line distribution system which leads from a 115-kilovolt main transmission line running between Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula. Both single- and three-phase power are available locally.

Girdwood is a relatively minor part of a much larger electric power system which extends from the Anchorage Bowl to the northern Kenai Peninsula and from Whittier to Tyonek. The system utilizes power sources remote from Girdwood, and the only local power-related facility is a substation located off the Alyeska Highway in the old townsite area.

As of September, 1992, there were 1,242 metered electric power customers in the Girdwood valley area. Upgrading of the substation and transmission switching were undertaken in 1991. The local system has no serious problems and, except for routine maintenance, Chugach Electric anticipates no need for additional major improvements.

**NATURAL GAS**

The Girdwood area does not have access to natural gas as a source of heat and energy. Most of the residents and businesses in Girdwood currently use oil, propane, wood, electricity or a combination of these.

For many years, there has been interest by residents in receiving natural gas service. However, no objective evaluation of the feasibility of extending service to the area had been done until recently. In 1993, Enstar Natural Gas Company did an economic feasibility study, to include evaluations of various routing alternatives, and to determine what it would cost to extend service to the community.

Enstar concluded that the extension of a new 8-inch pipeline from Anchorage via Powerline Pass would be the most feasible means of extending service to Girdwood, as well as the Bird and Indian communities. The cost of the transmission line was estimated at \$12 million.

One proposal for financing the line would be for the State to pick up two thirds of the cost (\$8 million) and the Municipality the other third (\$4 million). The Municipality's portion would be funded through a local improvement district where the Girdwood property owners would be assessed for the costs. Once the line reached Girdwood, Enstar would assume the costs for the distribution system.

Another alternative currently being investigated would be to convert an existing 8-inch line which is operated by the Defense Fuel Supply Command and used to transport petroleum products from Whittier to Anchorage. The line is believed to be surplus to current needs and, thus, may be available for conversion to transport of natural gas. The cost of line conversion is estimated to be \$3 million. The Girdwood Board of Supervisors has made a formal request of the federal government to see if the line may be made available. The Anchorage Assembly also supports the investigation of this alternative.

This Plan supports the extension of natural gas service to Girdwood. It would be a much less expensive and cleaner form of energy, particularly for heating. The use of natural gas over other currently used energy sources would improve the air quality in the valley, especially during the colder winter months. The cost and feasibility of new development would also be less with the economical source of energy that natural gas would provide.

**SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL**

Solid waste disposal services are provided within the Girdwood Valley Service Area by two entities. The Municipality's Solid Waste Services has maintained a transfer station in the community since 1976, while Peninsula Sanitation is licensed by the Alaska Public Utilities Commission to pick up and haul garbage.

The Girdwood transfer station is located on Ruane Road, next to the wastewater treatment plant. A 120-cubic yard transfer trailer is used to receive garbage that is hauled there either by individuals or businesses. Reportedly, most residential users haul their own garbage. Peninsula Sanitation has close to 115 local customers.

Solid Waste Services hauls the filled transfer trailers directly to the Anchorage Regional Landfill located near Hiland Road and the Glenn Highway north of Anchorage. Approximately 45 tons a week of solid wastes are removed from Girdwood each week. This quantity should increase significantly when the new Alyeska Prince Hotel is operating at capacity.

The solid waste disposal system at Girdwood generally works well. Previously, the main problem had been that the former containers were open to the elements. This problem was rectified in 1993 when a new covered transfer station was completed and a new attendants building and a buried holding tank added. In the longer term, the transfer building can be expanded to place two trailers to receive solid waste if it becomes necessary.

### **TELEPHONE**

Telephone service in Girdwood is provided by the Anchorage Telephone Utility, which serves the Anchorage Bowl and also provides service south along Turnagain Arm to the Begich-Boggs Visitor Center in Portage, plus the small Kenai Peninsula communities of Sunrise and Hope. Originally, telephone service in Girdwood was provided by a private operator from an exchange located in the old townsite. The system was acquired by the Anchorage Telephone Utility from GAB Telecommunications, Inc., in June, 1978.

The Girdwood Wire Center serves a 9.51-square-mile area. It was constructed in 1984 and is located on Lindblad Avenue in the new Girdwood townsite. In turn, it is currently served by the Central Wire Center in Anchorage via host/remote line modules over a fiber-optic cable which extends between Anchorage and Whittier.

The 1992 Anchorage telephone book includes a total of 912 listings for Girdwood. It should be noted that this figure understates the actual number of lines because it excludes unlisted numbers and because agencies and corporations such as the U.S. Forest Service and the Alyeska Resort have multiple lines.

Local growth in demand for telephone service has reportedly been relatively flat for the past few years. However, the Anchorage Telephone Utility is currently assessing options for upgrading and expanding telephone service in the Girdwood area in light of the new 307-bed Alyeska Prince Hotel and associated development.

### **SNOW REMOVAL**

Snow removal services in the Girdwood Valley Service Area are presently contracted out to a private company. Girdwood normally receives in excess of 128 inches of snow per year. This, coupled with uneven grades in some portions of the valley, makes efficient snow removal essential to the community's well-being.

To date, snow removal has primarily involved pushing snow off the traveled way of local roads. However, the Municipality's Public Works Department is investigating the possibility of establishing a snow dump area on a five-acre site occupied by the Girdwood wastewater treatment plant's former percolation pond off Ruane Road.

Eventually, there may be a need for a centralized snow disposal site. Off-site snow storage can be minimized, however, if on-site snow storage is incorporated into the site design for new development and roadways.