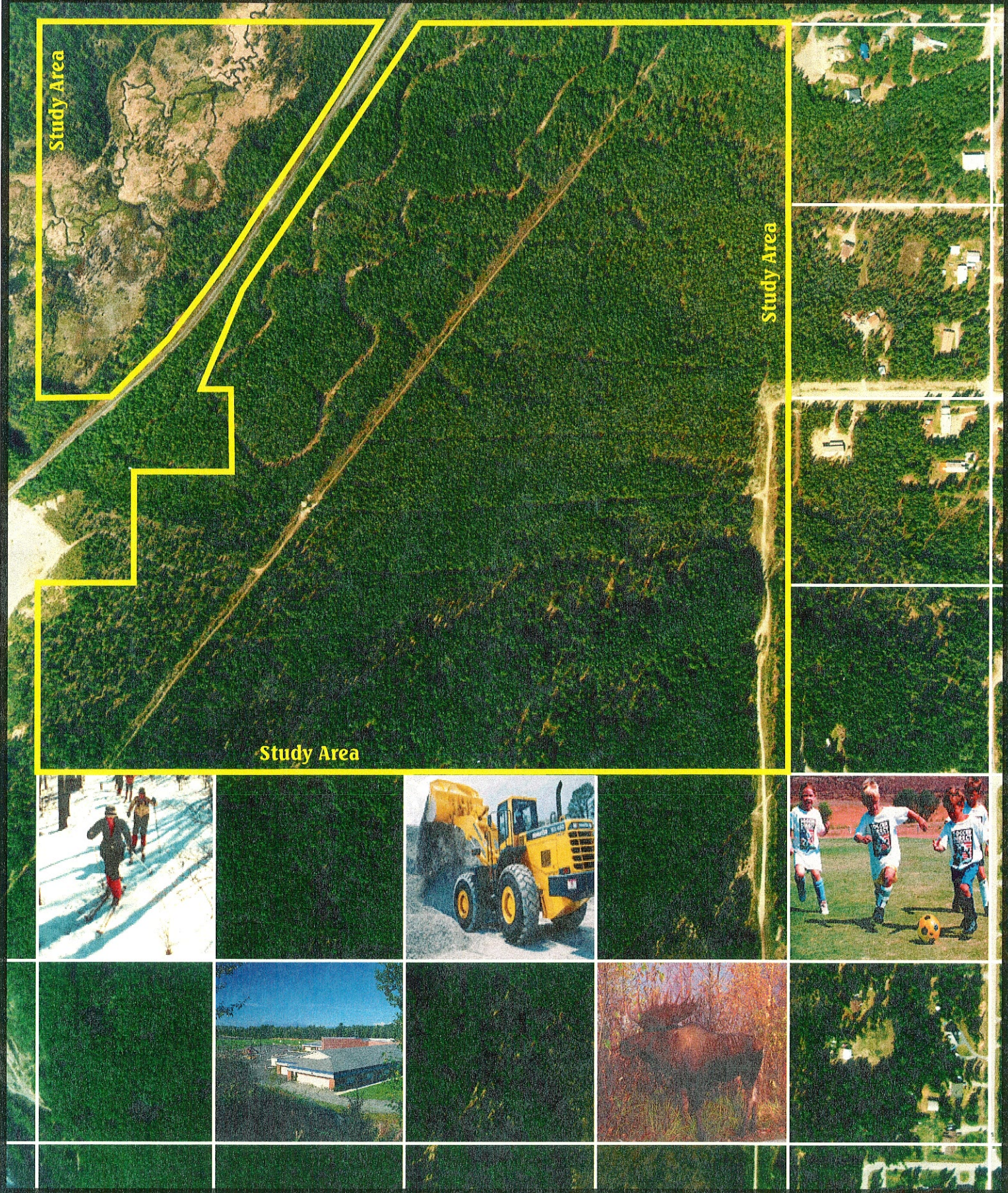


# NW 1/4 Section 25 Land Use Study

Draft

Planning Department  
Municipality of Anchorage  
August 2001





# Municipality of Anchorage



P.O. Box 196650  
Anchorage, Alaska 99519-6650  
Telephone: (907) 343-4333  
Fax: (907) 343-4526  
<http://www.ci.anchorage.ak.us>

*George P. Wuerch, Mayor*

## HERITAGE LAND BANK

August 22, 2001

Dear Residents:

The draft *NW¼ Section 25 Land Use Study* contains the Planning Department's analysis and recommendations regarding the future use of the NW¼ Section 25. This is the result of the planning process that began late last year.

This report provides the public and decision-makers with background information and land use recommendations, which should be useful during the upcoming public review process. Each of the entities listed below will hold a public hearing and public deliberations regarding the future use of the NW¼ Section 25.

Here is the tentative schedule of public hearings:

**Chugiak-Eagle River Parks & Recreation Board of Supervisors**

Monday, September 10, 7 p.m.  
Room 204, Valley River Center  
11901 Business Boulevard, Eagle River

**Planning and Zoning Commission**

Monday, October 8, 6:30 p.m.  
Assembly Chambers Room 108, Z.J. Loussac Library  
3600 Denali Street, Anchorage

**Heritage Land Bank Advisory Commission**

Wednesday, October 17, 11:30 a.m.  
Mayor's Conference Room 830, City Hall  
632 West Sixth Avenue, Anchorage

**Assembly - Introduction, 5 p.m. Tuesday, November 20**

**Public Hearing, 5 p.m. Tuesday, December 10**  
Assembly Chambers Room 108, Z.J. Loussac Library  
3600 Denali Street, Anchorage

In addition, municipal staff from Heritage Land Bank, Planning, and Cultural & Recreational Services will be available to discuss the study and the upcoming public review process at an **open house** at Birchwood Elementary School on Wednesday, September 19, at 7:00 p.m.

If you have questions in the meantime, please contact Pat Tilton, Heritage Land Bank at 343-4336 or Tom Davis, Planning Department at 343-4224. We look forward to working with you to resolve long-standing land issues concerning the NW¼ Section 25.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George J. Cannelos".

George J. Cannelos  
Executive Director

**NW¼ Section 25  
LAND USE STUDY  
(Draft)**

**August 1, 2001**

**Prepared by  
The Municipality of Anchorage  
Planning Department  
for the  
Heritage Land Bank**

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## SUMMARY

The *NW¼ Section 25 Land Use Study* is a site-specific study for a 145-acre Heritage Land Bank (HLB) property located in Birchwood. This area is one of several large HLB properties in Chugiak-Eagle River that the Municipality has yet to formally commit to a specific use. The purpose of this study is to determine the most appropriate land use for the NW¼ Section 25. Its recommendations are based on community facility needs, environmental characteristics, compatibility with surrounding land uses, available infrastructure, recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and relevant satellite plans, HLB responsibilities, and community preferences and aspirations.

The *Land Use Study* recommends a balance of multiple community facility needs related to the Study Area. It is recommended to add the majority of the NW¼ Section 25 to Beach Lake Regional Park, primarily for trails and open space. There is a provision of 35 acres within this parkland for community sports fields. A park access and collector street is also required to provide site access and north-south connectivity in Birchwood. The southeastern corner of the Study Area, a ridge top of 9 acres, is reserved for an elementary school site. Finally, the land use recommendation accommodates a need for limited gravel extraction.

A final recommendation for the easterly plain of the Study Area is contingent on the resolution of two outstanding issues. First, the appropriate extent of park facilities in the easterly plain should rely on an updated *Beach Lake Park Master Plan*. A park master plan should review the future needs of recreational user groups for the regional park, and coordinate, balance and preserve recreational uses through policy statements and location and design of facilities. A land use recommendation regarding the easterly plain also depends on the extent of gravel extraction in the NW¼ Section 25. The Municipality and the State should negotiate an agreement that sets limits to extraction, in order to minimize impacts on parks and neighborhoods, and to accommodate other legitimate community facility needs. Given the outstanding issues, there are three (3) land use options for the easterly plain. While each option is legitimate, Option C - Limited Action is preferred, because the most appropriate use of the easterly plain cannot be determined until the gravel extraction agreement and an updated plan for Beach Lake Park have been addressed.

This study was prepared to meet the requirements of the *Comprehensive Plan* and HLB regulations (AMC 25.40) regarding site-specific studies for undesignated, uncommitted HLB lands. Review and approval of the study must comply with the public process under AMC 25.40 and includes review by area community councils, the Chugiak-Eagle River Parks Board, the Heritage Land Bank Advisory Commission, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the Assembly. Approved land use designations will constitute amendments to the *Comprehensive Plan*.



# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

## Purpose

The *NW¼ Section 25 Land Use Study* is a site-specific study for a 145-acre Heritage Land Bank (HLB) property located in Birchwood. The general location of the property appears on the Chugiak–Eagle River Vicinity Map. The purpose of the *Land Use Study* is to determine the most appropriate use for the NW¼ Section 25 Study Area.

In Chapter 1, the study discusses the goals of municipal land management, the role of a land use study, and the planning process for designating community land. Chapter 2 examines the Study Area and vicinity, including physical characteristics of the site, surrounding land uses, and other key issues. Chapter 3 evaluates community facility needs and aspirations related to the Study Area. Chapter 4 integrates the research and analysis into a set of Land Use Alternatives for the Study Area, evaluates the implications of each alternative, and provides the basis for the Land Use Recommendations in Chapter 5.

## Management of HLB Lands

The NW¼ Section 25 was conveyed to the Greater Anchorage Area Borough by the State of Alaska in 1968, and later deposited in the municipal Heritage Land Bank. This land remains one of several large municipal properties in Chugiak-Eagle River that have yet to be formally committed to a specific use. The HLB is responsible for managing uncommitted lands for the Municipality in a manner designed to benefit present and future citizens of the community, to promote orderly development, and to achieve the goals of the *Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan*.

Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC) Section 25.40 establishes and defines the role of the Heritage Land Bank. Part of the purpose of the HLB is to acquire, inventory, manage, withdraw, transfer, and dispose of municipal land that has not been dedicated or transferred to a specific municipal agency for one or more municipal uses. Under AMC Section 25.40.025, Heritage Land Bank Disposals, the HLB is charged with determining which land or interests in land should be disposed of. Such a determination must be consistent with AMC Section 25.40.020, Management of Heritage Land Bank Lands, and the applicable comprehensive plan and implementing measures.

According to AMC Section 25.40.025, if the information in the comprehensive plan and implementing measures is insufficient to determine whether the disposal



of a parcel or parcels is consistent with the plan or measure, then a land use study shall be conducted. This land use study must be completed and adopted through the public process established under AMC Section 25.40.

AMC Section 25.40.025, further establishes that, at a minimum, a site-specific land use study shall address the following:

- (a) the need for community facilities such as roads, parks, trails, schools, satellite municipal offices, etc.;
- (b) identification of historical and natural landmarks, natural hazards, and environmentally sensitive lands;
- (c) public utility needs;
- (d) potential residential, commercial, and industrial uses;
- (e) land use compatibility with adjacent areas; and
- (f) consistency with land uses identified in the Comprehensive Plan and zoning for the area.

## Why Study the NW¼ Section 25?

The HLB may designate or dispose of a large landholding once it has prepared a land use study to determine the public needs for the land and which portions of the holdings, if any, should be disposed of. Such a land use study and designation has yet to be prepared and adopted for the NW¼ Section 25.

The Municipality partially completed a draft land use study for this property in 1991, during the preparation of the *Chugiak–Eagle River Comprehensive Plan*. The draft provides much information that is incorporated in the chapters to follow. However, the draft is also incomplete and outdated. It is missing a site environmental analysis, a public facility needs analysis, and a recommendations chapter. There was no public review or adoption.<sup>1</sup> Two years later the *Chugiak–Eagle River Comprehensive Plan* adopted a land use designation specifically for the NW¼ Section 25.

That designation is Residential/Park, with Environmentally Sensitive Lands in the northwestern corner. However, the *Comprehensive Plan* does not specify which areas should be a certain use nor a density of residences per acre.

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<sup>1</sup> The 1991 *Land Use Study (Site-specific) of the NW¼ of Section 25, Draft #2* appears in Appendix B.



*Comprehensive Plan* guidance regarding the NW¼ Section 25 is as follows:

The Heritage Land Bank manages large land holdings in the Chugiak-Eagle River area. These lands were selected by the Municipality as part of its state land entitlement and are currently uncommitted to any specific use. However, support has periodically been voiced locally for utilizing some of these lands for specific purposes. For example, the Birchwood and Eagle River Community Councils have requested that the northwest quarter of Section 25 be reserved for park use.

Land placed in the Heritage Land Bank is generally land that is reserved for future public purposes, land that is excess to municipal needs but unsuitable for disposal or development, or land that is excess to municipal needs that may be disposed through sale or lease to the private sector. Revenues generated from land disposals are used for acquiring land that is well located and is suited for public purposes.

It is the intent of this Plan that specific studies be done for large Heritage Land Bank land holdings before any disposals take place. Such studies should include an evaluation of public need, an evaluation of impacts of proposed uses on adjoining properties and public infrastructure, community aspirations; and Land Bank goals and objectives. Revised land use designations for these properties may then be appropriate. (Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan pp. 135-136)

In this way, the *Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan* directed that a site-specific land use study of the HLB property shall be prepared in order to provide sufficient direction to guide the future use of the property.

## **Planning, Public Review, and Approval Process**

The *NW¼ Section 25 Land Use Study* adheres to the planning process requirements of AMC Section 25.40.025 regarding site-specific studies. Following is a summary of the planning process used to prepare the study, throughout which public discussion and written comments were integrated with the application of planning principles and analysis:

1. Data Collection and Analysis regarding site conditions, surrounding land uses, and other factors. A public information meeting was held on December 6, 2000. Public discussion and written comments regarding community needs for the Study Area were incorporated into land use alternatives.
2. Inventory of Existing Land Uses in the surrounding area, including characteristics, needs, and compatibility with neighboring uses.
3. Identification of Potential Land Use Types for the Study Area, including acreage needs, environmental constraints, and compatibility with other uses.



4. List of Key Land Use Issues, based on all of the information above, that Land Use Alternatives must address.
5. Identification of Land Use Alternatives for the Study Area, in consideration of environmental constraints, land use compatibility, and public facility needs. A community discussion of Land Use Alternatives for the Study Area took place at Birchwood ABC Elementary on April 18, 2001. Comments from this second meeting resulted in changes to the Alternatives and evaluation.
6. Evaluation of the Land Use Alternatives, in terms of how the Land Use Alternatives address the key issues, and implications for a recommendation.
7. Selection of Land Use Recommendations, through narrowing of the list of preferred alternatives to a Land Use Recommendation.

Review and approval of the study will comply with the public process procedures under AMC Section 25.40.030 and include review by area community councils, the Heritage Land Bank Advisory Commission, the Chugiak-Eagle River Parks Board of Supervisors, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the Anchorage Assembly. Approved land use designations for the NW<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> Section 25 will become an amendment to the *Chugiak–Eagle River Comprehensive Plan*.





# Chugiak - Eagle River Vicinity Map

