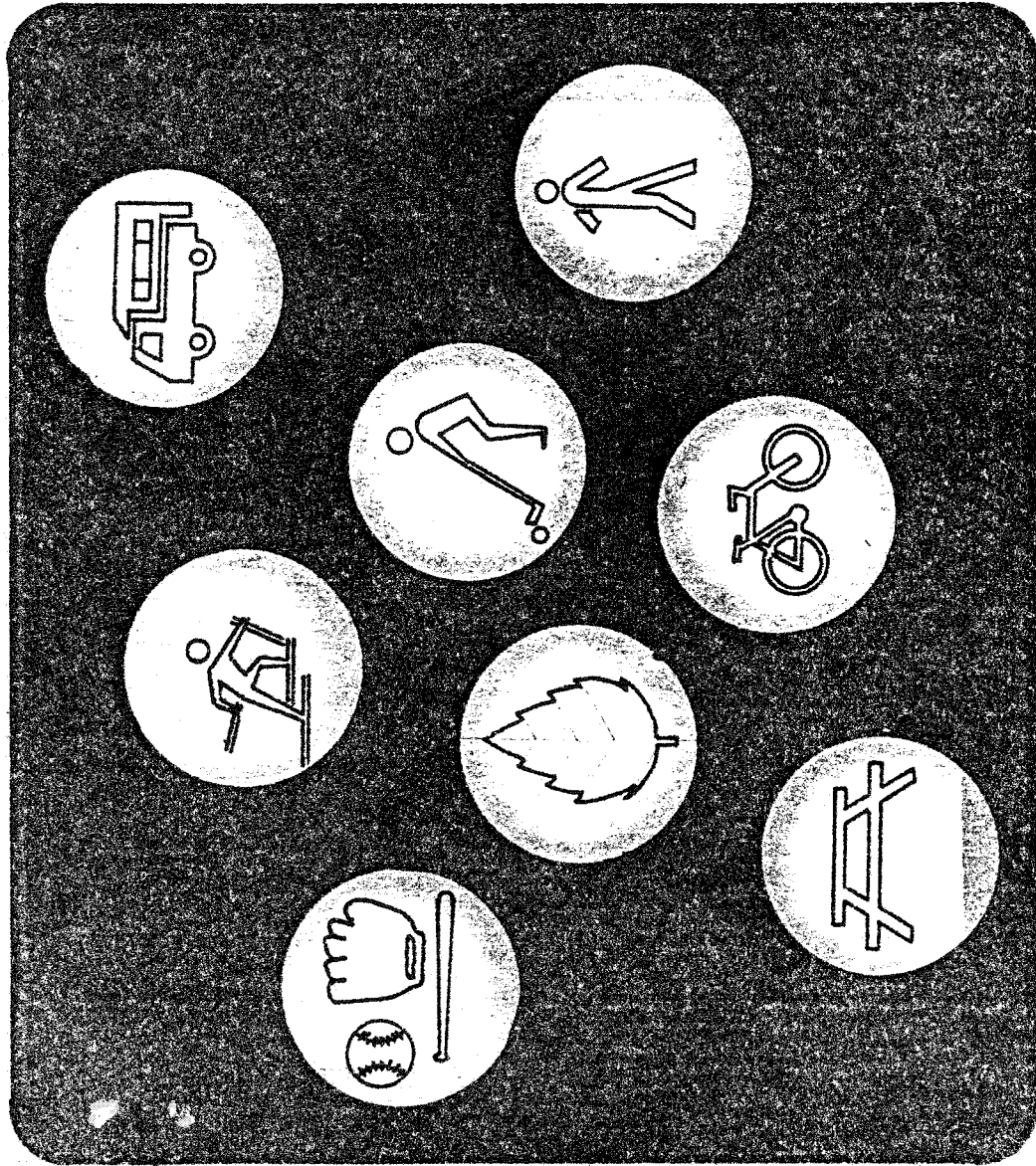


# **RUSSIAN JACK SPRINGS PARK**

# **MASTER PLAN**



# MASTER PLAN

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# RUSSIAN JACK SPRINGS PARK

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## PREFACE

A park is, by its nature a place for recreation, and has the responsibility to provide its visitors with a full and satisfying recreational experience. The design plan for Russian Jack Springs Park is intended to fulfill this responsibility.

Russian Jack Springs Park is a 320 acre regional park serving the residents of the Municipality of Anchorage. As a regional park, it offers both natural open space and a wide variety of outdoor recreational opportunities. Its pure, artesian springs form the headwaters of the middlefork of Chester Creek, its knolls are high points in urban Anchorage, and its varied topography and vegetation represent a wide cross section of ecological communities. Its scenery, wooded trails, picnic areas and sports facilities rank it among the three most visited parks in Anchorage.

The property was acquired from the War Assets Administration on October of 1948. Since then, the population of Anchorage has grown from around 30,000 people to just over 200,000 people. This has meant that the community has expanded to surround the park, giving the area an urban flavor.

The park site has been fragmented by the development of DeBarr Road, which cuts the park into two parts. In spite of this, the site has tremendous potential to accommodate a variety of user

needs through planned development.

It is the intent of this master plan to provide a picture of Russian Jack Park as it is now, and as it could be, if developed in the best interests of recreation for the residents of Anchorage. This plan is intended to serve as a guideline for future decisions and policies regarding the site, as an accurate base of information on what exists at present, and what needs are most important to be met. It is intended also to provide a data base for future updating of plan concepts and development recommendations as new factors of change enter into the picture.

It is hoped that the plan will guide the future development of Russian Jack Springs Park to meet the growing and changing recreational needs of tomorrow's residents of Anchorage.

## OBJECTIVES

### Goal:

To develop a master plan for Russian Jack Springs Park, integrating existing and potential uses, to guide future development of the site.

### Objectives:

1. To maintain Russian Jack Springs in perpetuity as a regional public park for the benefit of the residents of Anchorage.
2. To identify and fulfill recreational needs of the community and

the neighborhood in the most aesthetic and cost effective way.

3. To protect the natural environment within the park necessary to provide quality recreational opportunities.
4. To provide a physical plan, regulations, and controls which will accomplish recreational objectives, and insure the continuous maintenance of these lands as a regional park for the benefit of future generations.

#### METHODOLOGY

In order to fulfill the plan objectives, a methodology of research, analysis, synthesis, and plan development was followed.

Research included the collection of physical site, and user demand data. These factors were then analyzed and synthesized to develop specific planning criteria. From this criteria evolved a master plan.

Specific tasks:

1. Identify recreation and park needs; community wide and neighborhood; existing and projected. Determine and prioritize list of needed facilities and activities, in light of overall plan and objectives.
2. Research and analyze existing site conditions, natural and man-made, uses and facilities, parkwide and area specific. Determine planning implications, potentials and constraints, in light of overall plan goals and objectives.

3. Research and analyze each projected facility/activity specific site requirements as to space, slope, access, relation to other activities and facilities.
4. Interrelate existing site conditions with activity requirements to determine environmental suitability and carrying capacity for specified uses.
5. Interrelate recreational needs and environmental suitability to generate final master plan program. Program states what activities and uses are recommended for the park; how many or how large; and where they are to be located.
6. Interrelate existing site conditions and facilities and activities program analyzing to what extent existing facilities fill the plan program and how much new development or changes of use are required. Produce preliminary plan drawings and graphics.
7. Interrelate recreational need and demand with site/activities program to establish priorities and phases of development. Generate specific recommendations for specific areas.
8. Generate final graphics and narrative for presentation of Master Plan.

In the planning process every attempt has been made to explore alternative concepts where special problems have been identified. This is to solve problems, rather than just patch them up temporarily.

The plan has also sought to anticipate future conflicts of use, and

resolve these planning relationships at the outset, rather than generate new problems.

A major part of the master planning process is the working out of physical site relationships. This involves identifying existing and future factors, both on and off the site, which need to be related in the plan, analyzing their relationships in terms of importance, desirability or undesirability, closeness or distance, scale, longevity, seasonal changes, and fitting these relationships into the existing physical framework of the site.

Depending on the complexity of the existing conditions and numbers of desired factors and results, the process can be simple or extremely complex. Special attention has been given to this plan because Russian Jack Park presents a fairly complex set of factors, including existing site uses, and natural conditions; as well as long range needs for serving the entire community.

SITE PLANNING INTERRELATIONSHIPS:													
	CRITICAL	IMPORTANT	POSSIBLE	ACTIVITY TYPES	REQUIRED STRUCTURES	REQUIRED USE AREAS	REQUIRED ACCESS	REQUIRED PARKING	SITE LOCATION	SITE FEATURES	NEIGHBORHOOD USE	COMMUNITY USE	PERSONAL USE
ACTIVITY TYPES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
REQUIRED STRUCTURES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
REQUIRED USE AREAS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
REQUIRED ACCESS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
REQUIRED PARKING	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SITE LOCATION	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SITE FEATURES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
NEIGHBORHOOD USE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COMMUNITY USE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PERSONAL USE	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## **2. THE NEED**

## LOCATION AND SETTING

The Municipality of Anchorage is located in the south central region of Alaska at the head of Cook Inlet and occupies a triangular area of 1,700 square miles.

The Municipality is bordered by water to the North, West and South. The Chugach Mountains are to the East. Cook Inlet is to Anchorage's immediate west, and includes Knik Arm, branching off to the north-east, and Turnagain Arm, branching off to the southeast. Both arms are rather narrow and relatively shallow, silt-laden bodies of water.

The Chugach Mountains are to Anchorage's immediate east and run in a north to south direction. Roughly 85% of the Municipality is covered by the rugged Chugach Mountains.

The Anchorage bowl, a large alluvial plain, comprises 15% of the total Municipal land area. It is just to the west of the Chugach Mountains. The Municipality of Anchorage is located here as it is the only area suitable for development.

The alluvial plain declines in elevation from 500-600 feet at the mountain front to about 80 feet above sea level. The entire low-land is separated from the sea by steep bluffs, and only in the

valleys of major streams does the land approach sea level with a gentle gradient.

The Municipality of Anchorage is in a transitional zone between the extremes of sub-arctic maritime and sub-arctic continental climates. The mean annual temperature is 35°F., with an annual precipitation of 15 inches. The yearly average temperature is 42°F. The average wind speed is 6.6 mph and prevails from the north except during the summer when it prevails from the south.

The combination of climate, topography, location, and major transportation routes to the interior of the state, have made Anchorage the principle city of Alaska. Approximately 200,000 live in the Municipality, about 45% of the State's population. Within the Municipality, approximately 84% of the population lives in the Anchorage bowl area. About 5% live in the Eagle River/Chugiak area north of Anchorage, 10% live on military bases, with a small percentage living along Turnagain Arm to the south.

Since September 9, 1975, when residents voted to combine the former city and borough governments, the Anchorage Municipality has governed the entire area from Portage in the south to Eklutna in the north.

The Municipality is organized around the service area concept which allows different levels of service to be provided within the Municipality.

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Historically, the development of Anchorage has been tied to the growth of Alaska, especially recently in relation to the petroleum industry. Employment generated by this industry is principally centered in Anchorage, which is the center for the State's oil industry.

Eventhough the oil industry has provided the impetus for Anchorage's economic growth, the single largest employment sector is government. Government currently employs 31% of the labor force. The principal growth has been in State and local government. Anchorage is also heavily dependent on its port. The port of Anchorage distributes goods to 70% of the States population.

The present population of Anchorage can be characterized as young, composed of small nucleus households, predominately white, well educated, and reasonably affluent. Average household incomes range from \$20,000 to \$42,000. The 1977 population is fairly evenly balanced. However, there are slightly more males than females due to the influx of construction workers. The median age is 26.12. It appears that Anchorage's population is getting slightly older as more people make Alaska their permanent home. In 1970 the median age was 23.9 years.

The racial composition of the community has been relatively stable in recent years. While racial minorities make up only about ten percent of the population, they are disproportionately concentrated in the northern and older parts of Anchorage; Fairview, downtown, Government Hill and Mountain View.

The Anchorage populace is better educated than the national average. Those who have completed college constitute 22.7% of the adult population.

Anchorage has experienced a slight decline in household size dropping from 3.28 to 3.18 persons during the 1970's, due to a decline in the number of children. The traditional nuclear family is the dominant relational pattern in Anchorage. Husband and wife teams compose 46.8% of the population.

Anchorage has always been characterized by a large transient population; 50% have resided in Anchorage six years or less, while 19.8% have been here for less than two years. The turnover in terms of housing has been very high; 40.2% of the residents have lived in their present homes less than 18 months, and 80% have moved within six years. The median occupancy is only two years.

The Russian Jack Springs Park vicinity is composed of portions of the Government Hill/Mountain View, Lake Otis and Muldoon Planning Districts. It is also within the Russian Jack Park Community Council boundaries.

The total estimated population could be in excess of 23,000.

Anchorage, for a city of its size, is unique in that its communities are not highly differentiated. As a result, the Russian Jack Springs community profile, on the whole, reflects Anchorage's.

The Russian Jack Springs area is slightly more racially mixed, the average income is slightly lower, (\$33,600), average educational attainment slightly higher, the length of residence slightly lower, and the expressed degree of satisfaction with their neighborhood virtually identical to Anchorage as a whole. The major significant difference is in household size. Average family size is larger, 3.4 versus 3.3 persons. This is due to the greater number of children, both in terms of larger numbers, and in the number per family. Approximately 70% of the residents in the Russian Jack Springs Area have children versus 65% for the rest of Anchorage.

An additional factor affecting Park Planning is the mobility of Anchorage residents. As previously stated, Anchorage residents are highly mobile, both in terms of moving within Anchorage and into or out of Anchorage and Alaska. Specific mobility studies in the Russian Jack Area have not been conducted, but it appears that the Russian Jack Area has a more mobile population than Anchorage as a whole. This is based on the premise that persons in mobile homes, "starter" homes, and apartments are more transient.

#### LAND USE

Land use within the Anchorage bowl reflects Anchorage's role as the state center for trade and white collar employment. Anchorage's land use is similar to that of many large cities. It has a waterfront dock area, central downtown business district, and most commercial and industrial land use areas are located along the major roads and highways. Anchorage, however, is unique in that various land uses are integrated. Within the past several years Anchorage has become ever more typical as suburban commercial sprawl has developed along Benson and Northern Lights Boulevards. In terms of developed versus undeveloped acreage in the Anchorage bowl, 41% of the land has been developed, with the remaining 59% vacant. This vacant figure may seem high at first, but, it also includes land which is economically undevelopable. Of the land which has been developed, residential land-use accounts for about 50%. Commercial and industrial uses comprise about 10%. Parkland and water also take up about 10% of the total developed land. The remaining developed land is used for roads, utilities, and public uses.

The Russian Jack Springs Park area is located within a moderate density residential community. The area is principally zoned for multiple family residential development. Currently, 61% of the area has been developed leaving 24% as vacant land and 15% for roads.

Residential land use comprises the principal use pattern (34%). In the future the area will maintain its residential character, as 66% of future development will be towards continued residential development. Single family residential areas are generally on smaller than standard lots. 60% of the residences are owner occupied. However, only 49% of the homes are single family dwellings. Multi-family dwellings account for 38% of all homes, and trailers the remaining 13%. Immediately adjacent to Russian Jack Springs these figures are skewed by the presence of four large trailer courts.

Parkland in the area including Russian Jack Springs comprises 19% of existing land use. However, most of it is undeveloped. Only one small developed park (Kanchee Park, 2.4 acres) is located within the area. Two other parks are located within the area; Nunaka Valley Park (partially developed), and Cheney Lake (undeveloped). Both are to the east of the southern portion of Russian Jack Springs. Both will be developed as community parks to meet neighborhood needs, permitting Russian Jack Springs Park to more adequately meet area wide demand.

The park is predominantly surrounded by residential development. However, the University of Alaska and East High are located to the immediate southwest and a major commercial development (Retail Shopping Center) is located just east of the park at the intersection of Boniface and DeBarr. The majority of vacant land lies

to the south, west, and northeast.

Commercial and industrial land-use account for about 4% of current land use in the vicinity. Future growth is expected to be solely in the commercial sector and it is expected to rise to 7% with complete development. Commercial development is principally of the retail shopping center form and is primarily located along the Boniface Parkway and the Glenn Highway. Industrial land use is limited to an auto wrecking firm.

There are three easements affecting the park site. A 40 foot wide park use easement will connect the northern portion of the park with Wonder Park Elementary School.

The north half of the park contains a 20 foot drainage easement along the west property line, and a 10 foot utility easement along the south property line.

Remaining land use falls into three categories; Public and Semi-public, Utilities, and Transportation corridor. Public and Semi-public uses include churches, schools or other public non-parkland, and comprises 8% of current land use. It is expected to rise to 10% with full development. Utilities comprise less than 1% of land use. The Transportation corridor consists of the road system which accounts for 15% of current land use.

## TRAFFIC/CIRCULATION

Anchorage's rapid growth during the early seventies has made traffic the number one urban problem in Anchorage. Currently the major arterial roads are slowly being upgraded to meet existing and projected demand. The park is adjacent to two major arterial roads which provide excellent access from all directions.

Russian Jack Springs is bisected by DeBarr Road, a major east-west arterial which intersects Boniface Parkway. Boniface Parkway, a major north-south arterial, forms the east property line of Russian Jack Springs Park.

The remaining streets surrounding Russian Jack Springs are residential collector streets. Pine Street forms the west property line of the park. Currently it is only partially developed and could serve as the major access point into both sections of the park. Sixth Avenue forms the northern boundary of the park. At present it is not a through street. It may eventually be put through to Boniface. Twentieth Avenue forms the southern boundary. It is the least developed of the roads and its completion is dependent on the local residents forming a Road Improvement District to pay for it.

Since 1975, Anchorage has been developing a bus system to serve the Anchorage Community. At present the bus system has fourteen bus

routes which operate six days a week. Like many other cities, service is limited in outlying areas. Four bus routes serve the park vicinity. The Scenic Park route passes through the park along DeBarr Road and the Mt. View route runs along Pine Street on the northwest border. Two additional bus routes, Muldoon, and Fort Richardson, pass near the park.

At present there is one bike trail within the park. It runs south from Boniface and 6th along the eastern border of the park, under DeBarr Road, past the picnic areas, and cutting across to the southwest corner of the park at Pine and 20th. When current road construction is completed there will be an east-west trail on both sides of DeBarr which will eventually connect eastward to Muldoon and westward to 15th. There are no existing loop trail connections within the park. A future separated grade crossing of Boniface between Perry and 20th is planned to connect with Nunaka Valley Trail. A completed connection is needed between the existing park trail and the Chester Creek Trail System. Two thirds of the bike trail in the south half of the park is lighted and receives heavy use during winter as a cross-country ski trail.

## PARKS AND RECREATION IN ANCHORAGE

The Anchorage Municipal Division of Parks and Recreation is the principal agency serving the recreational needs of Anchorage residents.

The Division manages over 8,000 acres of park land divided into three service areas; Anchorage, Girdwood, Eagle River; and provides a wide variety of recreational and community facilities and programs.

Parklands within the Municipal park system are divided into eight categories. The Regional Park such as Russian Jack Springs, according to this breakdown is designed to serve the entire Anchorage Community. In this category of park the major attractive features are its natural condition and its recreational opportunities. At least half of the park should be preserved in or near its natural condition. The remainder should be devoted to providing the widest possible spectrum of outdoor recreational activities possible. Recommended standards for this type of park are that it accommodate people within one hours driving time, and be at least 160 acres in size.

The U. S. Forest Service, the U. S. Bureau of Land Management, and the Alaska State Division of Parks, also provide limited recreational opportunities close to Anchorage such as camping, hiking, and interpretive walks.

The U. S. Forest Service manages Chugach National Forest (275,000 acres are located in the Municipality) which is located in the southern portion of the Municipality. The Chugach National Forest has an extensive system of trails, and an Interpretive Center with campgrounds by the Portage Glacier.

The Alaska State Division of Lands administers the 5,000 acres for the Campbell Tract east of Anchorage. Part of this land is expected to be turned over to the Municipality, currently it is undeveloped except for hiking and ski trails.

The Alaska Division of Parks manages Chugach State Park (495,000 acres). It is located in the Chugach Mountains just east of the city of Anchorage, eight miles from Russian Jack Springs Park. Chugach State Park provides a camping area at Bird Creek, several day-use areas, hiking and skiing trails in a wilderness environment, and a series of interpretive programs.

No studies have been conducted which examine private recreation in Anchorage. Only the Anchorage YMCA offers a broad spectrum of recreational programs to the Anchorage Public. This facility was just opened in the Spring of 1978.

Other private organizations exist, however, which serve only special interest groups or offer specialized recreational activities. These include organizations such as the Teamsters, who have a recreation center limited to members, and organizations such as the Anchorage Racquetball Club, which only provide Racquetball and Tennis opportunities.

## RECREATION NEED AND DEMAND IN ANCHORAGE

The residents of Anchorage have responded positively to the question of increased municipal effort to provide recreational opportunities. Two principal procedures are followed by the Municipal Parks and Recreation Division to elicit community attitudes and needs.

The first involves direct citizen contact and input through community meetings, the community council systems, and special interest groups such as Breakthrough.

The second procedure involves the use of surveys. This technique is very useful in terms of actually validating attitudes and needs in a quantifiable form. Three recent surveys have been conducted within the past few years; the Rowan Study (1975), the Human Resource Study (1977), and the Draft Report prepared for the Alaska Outer Continental Shelf Office (1978).

The conclusions reached by each of these reports are very similar and therefore tend to support each others findings:

- Anchorage residents are active people who take advantage of prevailing opportunities for leisure activity.

- 95% of residents say recreation is important to them. Most of these expressed preference for outdoor, unorganized activities.
- 80% indicated visiting parks as their top priority for recreation.
- Over 45% feel there are not enough recreational facilities available in the community.
- Support was indicated for moderate increase in park development and facilities, but no increase in acquiring new park land.
- Activities which receive highest participation and support are:  
(by priority)

Picnicking	Swimming
Sunning/Sitting	Skiing
Hiking/Walking	Motorcycling
Bicycling	Baseball
Camping	Basketball/Volleyball
Sightseeing	Fishing
- Citizens expressed strongest desire for more opportunities and facilities for: (by priority)

Playground Equipment	Special Events -
Picnicking	(Pleasure Faire, Music Festival, Fur Rondy, etc)
Camping	Youth Programs -
Bike & Ski trails	(Day & overnight camping, Scouts, Campfire, Clubs, Parks & Recreation Programs)
Baseball	Youth Sports -
Swimming	(All kinds)
Tennis	
Concerts & Theatre	
Art Exhibits	

o High Demand/Need (Figures based on National Standards):

<u>Outdoor</u>	<u>Needed</u>	<u>Indoor</u>	<u>Needed</u>
Basketball	133	Basketball	122
Picnic/Open Space/ Play Areas	113	Volleyball	27
Volleyball	25	Handball	11
Softball	22	Swimming Pool	8
Ice Skating Rinks	5	Gymnasium	4
Amphitheatre	5		
Community Center	4		
Golf Course (18 hole)	3		
Tennis	2		

o High Demand/Need (No standards available):

<u>Outdoor</u>	<u>Indoor</u>
Play Areas	Racquetball
Bike/Ski Trails	Skateboard Rink
Sledding/Sliding Hills	Weight Rooms
Snowmobile Areas	Sauna
Ski Hills	Badminton
Soccer Fields	

o Potential Facilities:

Interest expressed by citizens (High demand not developed because no available facilities):

Speed Skating Rink  
Indoor Bicycle Track  
Community Garden  
Planetarium

COMMUNITY INPUT

Vicinity Residents' Concern about Russian Jack Springs Park (Expressed at meeting with Community Councils May 3, 1978)

1. An additional bike trail crossing is needed under DeBarr because kids going to skiing and sliding hill have great hazard crossing DeBarr.
2. The Greenhouse entrance road is very unsafe. There is no pedestrian access to that area.
3. Bike trail access is needed into the park from South Mt. View.
4. Noise and dangers from illegal snowmachine use at the park are serious problems.
5. A Community Center is needed, it is suggested to build one in the park, a very exciting and esthetic building on the slope in the north half, near the picnic shelter area. The building can be used for all kinds of meetings, classes, neighborhood and community functions.
6. Playground needed along North Pine Street, or near Pine Street and 6th Avenue.
7. Trees should be preserved, more trees should be planted.
8. Hockey, basketball and other sports facilities are needed.
9. A neighborhood park is needed within Russian Jack Springs Park.

10. Drinking fountains are needed at bike trail rest stops.
11. Park rangers are needed for public relations and protection/surveillance, and maybe a live-in ranger caretaker.
12. The Chalet needs benches or picnic tables inside.
13. More lighted ski trail loops are needed, especially around base of ski hill.
14. The dark unlighted hills in Russian Jack could be used for a winter nighttime viewing area - for viewing and studying the stars and aurora. Maybe combine this use with the community center use of the proposed structure.

SITE REQUIREMENTS FOR SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

	<u>Space Needs</u>	<u>Slope/Topo</u>	<u>Soil</u>	(open vs wooded) <u>Vegetation</u>	<u>Direct Access To:</u>	<u>Adjacent to:</u>	<u>Utilities</u>
Outdoor Sport Fields	Very large 1-40 acres	Flat, level, 0-5%	Stable, well drained or adapted	Open (Cleared or low density)	Parking, road or street	Play area, support facility, indoor sports facility	All
Ski Hill and/or Sliding/Sledding Tobogganing	Large 4-8 acres	Hillside 5 to 50% Level at base	Stable	Open	Parking, road or street	Support facility	All
Bike/Ski Trails	Linear path 8' wide, 1/4 to 5 miles long	Varied, Rolling; 0 to 10%	Stable or adapted	Any (either open, wooded, or both)	Parking, streets and neighborhoods	Occasional connection to all parks	Power
Group Picnic	Medium: 1/2 to 3 acres	Varied, predominately level	Good drainage	Mixed (both open and wooded)	Vehicle or bike parking, road or street, restrooms	Open play lawn, trail (Optional: other rec facilities)	Water
Family Picnic	Small: 10'x20'	Varied, level or rolling	Good drainage	Any	Trails and/or parking	Any or all: rec facil. open lawn, play areas, trails, woods, other picnic facilities	Optional: Lighting, Water
Day/Overnight Camping	Medium: 1/2 to 5 acres	Varied: level and rolling	Stable or adapted	Mixed	Parking, road, support facilities	Trails, woods, optional: open space, rec facility	Water, Power, (Phone optional)
Play Area	Small: 1/8 to 1/2 acres	Flat to rolling	Good drainage	Any	Trails, neighborhoods	Any or all: rec facil. open space, woods, picnic areas, parking, support facilities	(Optional: Power, Water)
Nature Trail	Large: enough to maintain a natural system	Varied, natural	Varied, natural	All natural	Trails	Parking, support facilities	(Optional: Power, Water)
Roads	Linear path 15' to 30' wide	0 to 10%	Stable or adapted	Any	Streets, major use area, parking	-----	Power
Parking	Small (15 cars), Med. (25 cars) Large (75 cars)	0 to 10%	Stable or adapted	Open or mixed	Roads, streets, facilities to be served	Facility to be served	Power
Arboretum	Med. (2-4 acres)	Predominately level, some rolling	Stable or adapted	Mixed	Parking, roads, trails, service & support facil.	Greenhouses, growing houses, picnicing, open space	All
Indoor Sports	Med, (2-4 acres)	Level or sloped or combination	Stable or adapted	Any	Trails, parking roads	Optional: picnicing, outdoor rec facil.	All
Amphitheatre	Med. (1-4 acres)	Hillside (10-25%)	Stable	Open	Trails, parking	Optional: picnicing,	Power

### **3. THE RESOURCE**

## NATURAL CONDITIONS

The factors affecting the hydrologic balance underlying Russian Jack Springs Park are identical to the Anchorage Bowl as a whole. The principal factor is the split aquifer. The split aquifer results in two systems of subsurface water which are separated by an impermeable layer of confining clay about seventy feet below the surface. The shallow system flows above the clay and results in a high water table. It is interconnected with surface waters and controls the level of lakes, springs, and streams (such as Cheney Lake, Chester Creek, and Russian Jack Springs).

Factors uniquely affecting the hydrology within the park include its topography, soils, vegetation, and the local effects of urbanization. Approximately two-thirds of the park consists of hilly, well drained terrain. The remaining flat lowlands are composed of peatbogs which retain water and provide some recharge to the shallow subsurface water system.

Other surface hydrologic features on the site include the main and secondary springs located east of the main golf fairway, a spring-fed pond on the south border near 20th, and streams from both, which converge in the southwest corner of the site and flow north to leave the site near Pine and Reka Drive. The stream which flows out of Russian Jack Springs forms the Middle Fork of Chester Creek. The

middle fork is a Class A stream in terms of water quality, which means the water is suitable for drinking.

Urban development has had a principal effect in changing the hydrologic balance. For example, in order to accommodate urban development, the channel of Chester Creek has been straightened and lowered. The branch which flows out of Russian Jack Springs along the west property line is now no more than a drainage ditch. Furthermore, buildings and pavement in the area create impermeable surfaces resulting in a decrease of water infiltration into the soil and more rapid run-off. The net effect has been the reduction in ground water levels and a decrease in average annual stream flow, with more rapid rises and declines in stream flow. There has been some reduction in the flow from the Springs already. This can create flash flooding problems downstream. Should this trend continue, the water table around Russian Jack Springs will continue to decline, and the springs could dry up.

Erosion and flooding are not major problems within the park due to vegetative cover and drainage conditions. In the period from April to July, 1977, the middle fork's slow rate at the southwest corner of Russian Jack Springs Park was approximately three cubic feet per second. The temperature rose from 0.5°C to 4°C.\* (\*A.D.E.C. Biological and Water Quality Survey, Chester and Campbell Creeks, 1977). No water quality studies have been done in the streams within the park.

Springs, streams, and ponds on the site are quality recreational amenities in all seasons. As well as a source of fresh, pure, potable water, the main springs are a feature of sparkling beauty and interpretive interest. The creeks and ponds provide the site with natural ecological communities, and are a pleasing feature accommodating viewing, wading, and small-scale fishing. Existing and future pedestrian paths and bridges over the creek serve to enhance park visitors interaction with pleasing natural features.

The springs area lends itself very well to low-key development as an interpretive attraction and small wading pond. The south pond could support a small viewing and fishing platform, in conjunction with access and trails. Its shores are boggy and not appropriate for wading or boating.

The entire creek should be managed for protection from erosion, pollution, and over use.

The topographic features of the park are a reflection of historic dynamic natural processes affecting the Russian Jack Springs area. The primary influences have been glaciation and stream deposition, resulting in varied surficial geology.

Except for a major cut for DeBarr Road, and fill in the northwest ball field area, the natural topography of the site remains

relatively undisturbed. The most striking topographic feature of the park is a large morainal deposit which forms a 30 to 60 foot hill running diagonally north/south through the center of the park. The topography throughout the southeast section is also high and varied. Glacial alluvium there has formed a hill which rises to a high point 30 feet higher than the central moraine. This is a significant feature in that it is the highest point in urban Anchorage west of the Chugach Foothills.

The surficial geology of the north portion of the park consists mainly of course grained alluvium underlain with peat. The southern portion is more diversified consisting of fine grained lake sediments, course grained glacial alluvium, morainal deposits, and course grained stream alluvium.

Although not critical for most activities or facilities, soils and underlying geologic features are a determining factor when choosing sites for buildings and other structures. As an economic consideration, well drained, gravelly soil is generally preferable to build on as no special preparations may be required. There may also be serious environmental consequences from building on unsuitable soil. Earthquake hazards could be a significant factor, especially in the northwest boggy area of the park, which is underlain by a deposit of Bootlegger's Cove Clay.

The topography of the site is varied enough to provide ample areas for a variety of recreational features and facilities. Future development should be planned for a minimum of disturbance to the natural topography.

Slope characteristics are dependent upon the nature of the geologic material, and the geologic processes which have influenced the area. The variation in slope found at the site is representative of a diverse mixture of materials, historic and current natural processes.

Five categories of slope have been identified. Each type has a direct influence on the character and use of Russian Jack Springs Park. The chart below describes the recreational land uses best suited to specific slopes.

o Slope-Site Development Relationships:

<u>Average % Grade</u>	<u>Development Potential</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
0-5%	Good for parking lots, play fields, roads.	Minimum necessity for earthwork & retaining walls.
5-10%	Good for building sites, roads. Fair for parking lots, play area.	Minor necessity for earthwork and retaining walls.
10-15%	Fair to poor building sites and roads. Difficult for parking lots and play fields without slope alteration.	Moderate use of earthwork and retaining walls.
15% & over	Careful site planning required to insure against excessive earthwork. Potential for innovative development nestled into the bedrock.	Considerable use of earthwork and retaining walls.

In the past the site has been habitat or migration area for animals such as moose, bear, wolf, lynx, fox, muskrat, rabbit, squirrel, shrew, and weasel. Today, urbanization has eliminated the surrounding habitat for the larger animals, thereby practically eliminating them from the park site. Moose are still occasional summer and winter visitors, particularly in the bog areas east of the springs, and in the interior of the north half of the site.

The fish population is limited to a few small resident Dolly Varden, and possibly Rainbow Trout, in the streams and south pond.

The bird population is quite extensive, and probably the most significant wildlife in the park. Some birds remain all year such as the Redpoll, Raven, Black-Capped Chickadee, Boreal Chickadee, Black-billed Magpie, Gray Jay, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker and Spruce Grouse. Migrant and summer residents include Robins, Thrushes, Goshawk, Black-birds, Swallows, Juncos, Sparrows, Warblers, Brown Creepers, and Pine Sisking, as well as several water species; Dippers, Sandpipers, Gulls, Yellowlegs, and Snipes.

Wildlife in the area is not a major factor affecting the basic development of the park. However, it should still be given careful consideration in the planning of the park, for if care is taken, small birds will tend to remain. This will greatly enhance the value of the park and help preserve its natural amenities.

Approximately 80% of the site is covered with healthy stands of natural woodland vegetation forming a mosaic pattern of forest community types typical of the Anchorage bowl and interior Alaska. This mosaic pattern reflects a variety of underlying natural factors such as elevation, slope, solar aspect, soils, drainage, presence or absence of permafrost and past fire histories. In general, the forest types are most closely related to elevation levels, so any given type tends to occur throughout the site within certain elevation ranges.

The site has six distinct vegetative or forest community types, identified by their dominant tree species. All types have natural understories of mixed shrubs and smaller plants. The site vegetation has been considered for planning purposes by dominant species, and density of vegetative cover.

Treeless bogs occur in limited areas on the site where conditions are too wet for tree growth. In the past, treeless bogs were much more extensive, but the receding water table has enabled encroachment of black spruce forest into former treeless bog areas, leaving only small patches here and there. Vegetation consists mainly of grasses, sedges and mosses, especially sphagnum moss, with some small willows, ericaceous shrubs, dwarf birches, cranberry, blueberry, and Labrador tea. Because of relative rarity on the site, and unsuitable development conditions, these small areas should be

considered for preservation in their existing state.

Pure stands of black spruce bog forest occur extensively in the western and southern portions of the site at elevations where drainage is poor, and is perhaps underlain with Bootlegger's Cove Clay or permafrost lenses. The older black spruce forest forms very dense, almost impenetrable stands; creating a dark, dramatic, visual element and a quiet, effective sound and visual barrier. They are an excellent interpretive feature and are a priority for preservation.

An unusually fine stand of large spruce trees occurs along the stream west of the ski rope tow. This is designated as lowland spruce forest. It is different from typical black spruce bog in the size and density of the trees, the combination of white and black spruce, and biological community sustained by the trees. There are three islands of larger, denser spruce in the north half near Pine and 6th. This stand is a particularly unique feature, and should be carefully managed for preservation.

Excellent examples of a riparian ecology are found around the springs and along the stream edges. Included are occasional large cottonwood trees, poplar/alder/willow thickets, and various riparian herbaceous plants and grasses. East and south of the springs the riparian element mixes with black spruce, lowland spruce and treeless bog, making an especially rich area for nature interpretation. Large cottonwood trees

are found scattered occasionally throughout the site, though with more occurring near the springs and bog areas.

All slightly raised land and sloping hillsides support healthy communities of mixed birch and spruce forest. These vary throughout the site as to predominance of species, density, size, and age of trees, though all have a rich understory of mixed shrubs and smaller plants. Generally, this forest type is most suitable and adaptable for recreational development, having more visual, physical, and biological diversity than other types.

On the highest ground in both halves of the park are dense stands of pure birch forest. Here the trees are all of similar age and size, growing narrowly and close together, dependent upon each other for root support and wind protection. These woods create a unique textural and scenic quality, and comprise a distinct biological unit in contrast to other forest types. They should be a high priority for preservation. Any cuts or disturbances in these areas should be handled carefully to prevent vulnerable and unnatural looking edges such as can be seen along the paved parking lot near the girl scout day camp picnic shelters. This forest type is most suitable for moderate trail development.

Understory vegetation in all of the forest types consists of various mixes of shrubs such as Labrador tea, high bush cranberry, prickly

rose, willow, sweetgale, low cranberry, blueberry, crowberry, dwarf birch, cinquefoil, menziesii and devils club, as well as a rich variety of mosses, lichens and fungi.

#### UTILITIES

Water lines run along Pine Street, serving the softball field areas, DeBarr Road, with an untapped stubout near the greenhouses, and the western half of 6th Avenue. The day camp area and Lion's Camper Park have their own well with adequate supply for present use levels, though the camper park storage tanks are barely adequate for peak periods.

All facilities on the south end of the site are served by an internal water system pumped from springs. This water supply is adequate for present uses, except for some failures to meet greenhouse requirements during hot summers. Rehabilitation of the pump is needed. Additional development or changes in water table level and flows of the spring, would require rehabilitation of the existing water system and/or connection to municipal water.

Municipal sewer lines border the park along 6th Street and Pine Street. There is a connection to the northwest softball field restrooms. All other facilities within the park have their own individual septic tank systems. These appear adequate to meet present needs, (when pumped

### DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

regularly during heavy use periods). The septic tanks and cesspools at the camper park are very close to the water table, and have backed up on occasion.

The park lies on the border of the Chugach and Municipal service districts. Chugach Electric lines run along DeBarr, with an overhead line serving the Lion's Camper Park at 6th and Boniface. Municipal Light and Power lines run along DeBarr and Pine Street, with overhead service north of DeBarr to the Day Camp area. A recently completed underground two way circuit south of DeBarr serves the greenhouse and ski areas. This circuit runs south from DeBarr, along the access driveway to the ski hill, then west down the hill to Pine Street. Overhead lines off of this circuit light the ski trails and ski hill. Undergrounding of all overhead lines would comply with H.C.R.S. requirements, and greatly enhance the aesthetics and natural character of the park.

Gas lines run only along DeBarr, with a service stub to the greenhouse. All other facilities have their own separate gas storage tanks.

Telephone lines run along Boniface, Pine, and DeBarr. There is internal phone service from DeBarr to the greenhouse, residences, ski ticket booth, and the Camper Park. There is a need for public telephone service at the ski/golf area, and at the softball/tennis complex restroom.

The history of Russian Jack site is representative of several phases of Anchorage life and culture. Originally occupied by a homesteader, its springs were a source of fresh water. Since public acquisition the land has been used as a rehabilitation center for alcoholics, by the national guard, the girl scouts, the Nordic Ski Club, the Anchorage Golf Association, and a variety of individual recreationists.

#### o History of Facilities and Funding

1930's - Homesteader "Russian Jack" lived on the site.

1943 & 48 - Purchased by former City of Anchorage.

1950's - A facility for alcoholic rehabilitation developed in Southern half. Extensive gardens, and several structures. Known as the "Prison Farm".

1952 - Girl Scouts received a use lease from the former city for the day camping area north of DeBarr, and have used it ever since.

1954 - Park called "Russian Jack Springs Park" in a report by former city engineer.

1965 - First loop of the Camper Park put in by Lion's Club and donated to the Parks Department.

1967 - Greenhouse constructed with former City funds (finished in '71).

1968 -

- Roads and parking lots (BOR #34)
- Picnic shelters (BOR #34)
- Restrooms (BOR #34)
- Sled and ski hills developed (ski hill opened Jan 13, 1968) (BOR #34)
- Ski trails (BOR #34)
- Camper park - back loop (BOR #19)
- Day camp shelter and restroom (BOR #34)

1969 - Golf course opened Aug 1

1971 - (Pine & 6th)

- 1 softball field (west one) (BOR #68)
- 4 tennis courts (BOR #68)
- Restrooms and warm-up hut (BOR #68)

1972-73 - (North half, west of day camp)

- Picnic shelter (BOR #68)
- Restroom (BOR #68)
- Parking area (BOR #68)
- Enlargement of northwest restroom/warm-up
- Bike trail (south half) - Former city funds

1974 - (Pine & 6th) - East softball field developed by Anchorage

Softball Association

1975-76 - Bike trail (north half)

Lights along trail

1978 -

- 4 softball fields (north half)
- 2 access roads and parking areas
- 4 tennis courts
- Additional lights installed
- DeBarr Road widened through park to 5 lane highway
- Bike trails on both sides of DeBarr

Funding assistance from the former BOR, now called HCRS, has contributed to almost all developed facilities within the park.

#### ANALYSIS OF EXISTING USE PATTERNS

Russian Jack Springs is one of the three most heavily used parks in Anchorage. This usage is both a reflection of its closeness to Anchorage's population center, and the lack of other similar recreational facilities to absorb current demand. Because of its size, location, and natural conditions, Russian Jack serves a full spectrum of uses and users. It functions year round as a neighborhood park, a city wide recreational facility and an out-of-town visitor attraction.

° The Most Used Parks in Anchorage (Human Resources Study):

(Parks Ranked in order of Usage)

1. Delaney (Park Strip)
2. Valley of the Moon (Playground)
3. Russian Jack Springs

4. Goose Lake Recreation Area
5. Elderberry
6. Campbell Creek (Park Area)
7. Earthquake
8. Jewel Lake

Demand for outdoor recreation in Anchorage has far outstripped available facilities in all categories, thus the park must accommodate many more uses and visitors than it is currently designed for. At present it is the only park in Anchorage with major lighted ski trails and ski hill, the only park with a winter indoor visitor attraction, the only park with large scale expanses of rolling lawn space in natural surroundings, the only park with substantial natural springs, the only centrally located park with extensive, deep, natural woodlands, and also the only developed park in the Muldoon area, except for small neighborhood facilities in Kanchee and Nunaka Valley.

For planning purposes, uses of the park have been looked at in the following ways:

o Patterns of Use:

1. Summer versus winter use.
2. Single season or activity use versus multiple use.
3. Individual or family use versus organized or group use.
4. Scheduled continuing recreational programs and special events

versus unscheduled open use.

5. Active, structured use versus passive, informal use.
6. Under-use, over-use, and potential balanced use.
7. Vehicular versus pedestrian use.
8. Neighborhood use versus travel-in use.
9. Recreational use versus non-recreational use.
10. Problem use.
11. Appropriate use versus inappropriate use.

Spontaneous, informal and individual uses include: picnicking, bicycling, jogging, hiking, strolling, viewing, golf, tennis, camping, playing, exploring, fishing, greenhouse visiting, berry picking, mushroom hunting, skiing, snowshoeing, sledding, pick-up hockey, and unauthorized trail use by ORV's.

Structured, organized group uses include: softball league play, tennis classes, large group picnics, day camping, recreation programs, school class visits, running and orienteering races, ski lessons, tour bus visits, and group greenhouse visits.

Special events include: The Annual Fur Rondy Golf Classic, Softball tournaments, and "one shot" activities such as the National Cross Country Ski Championships, weddings, and school meets.

At present, pedestrian neighborhood use appears rather severely limited

by lack of safe, well developed access, and lack of appropriate facilities near neighborhood areas. There is some use of informal foot paths leading in from the south, west and north borders. Some users (including children) do cross Boniface into the woods on the east borders, but the major neighborhood use in all seasons comes into the park by way of the bike trail entrance at 20th and Pine. The recent completion of the DeBarr bike trail has already increased bike-in and walk-in visits from nearby residents. In winter, children from all neighborhoods walk or ski into the park to use the ski hill. Travel-in use (by bike, bus and car) from non-adjacent areas makes up the majority of park users. This includes a high percentage of northeast residents, some users from south and west Anchorage and some non-residents.

Attendance figures have been compiled since 1976 for certain facilities (ski hill, golf course, camper park) but an overall consistent use sampling study of the park, particularly trails and informal use, still remains to be done. The existing attendance figures fluctuate greatly from year to year depending upon weather, staffing policies, economics, and the occurrence of special events. For example in 1976, 21,000 persons used the golf course. In 1977 this fell to 7,300 due to staffing shortages, short season, and poor maintenance of the golf course. Camping also experienced a large decline of 10,000 campers between 1976 and 1977. This was due to the ending of the construction of the Oil Pipeline, increased vacancy rates in housing,

and a new policy of limiting campers to a maximum stay of seven days.

According to available departmental records and on-site observations, demand exceeds existing facilities for group picnicking, winter cross country ski parking and lighted areas, day and overnight youth camping and softball fields. Attendance patterns reflect consistent under-use of day camp and group picnic area, Lion's Camper Park, and golf course.

The majority of uses in the park are primarily recreational. However, paradoxically, the few non-recreational uses presently occupy the most visible and extensive structures, and are located in the most prime scenic and accessible areas in the park.

The greenhouse at present contributes to area wide landscaping and beautification, while providing a recreational function in maintaining its tropical and growing houses open to visitors. This function could appropriately be expanded.

The radio tower behind the greenhouse is located there because it is the highest accessible spot in Anchorage. It is used primarily by the Police Department and also by parks maintenance crews.

The large maintenance yard and buildings in the south half serve very few park-specific uses. They function as shops and storage areas for

the entire Parks Maintenance Section. They could appropriately be relocated.

The two houses by the golf course are presently used as residences for greenhouse personnel, while the trailer in Lion's Camper Park houses a year-round caretaker for the camper park only.

Vehicular use of the park consists of entering (at any one of five entrances) and driving a short spur road to a parking area which serves the desired recreational activity. Driving for pleasure is not a major use in the park, though some sightseeing driving occurs on the golf course road and the picnic area loop. This present type of vehicular use is considered appropriate and should be retained, thus continuing to provide travel-in access but reserving the core of the park for a variety of pedestrian uses.

As further recreational facilities are developed in the north half, appropriate sized parking lots and short spur entrances should be provided, but no major through roads should be constructed in the park.

Use-related problems in the park which can be mitigated to a greater or lesser degree by the plan recommendations are: excessive vandalism, circulation conflicts, inaccessibility, overloading of parking, inadequate facilities to meet demand, destruction of natural

features, disturbances between adjoining activities, deterioration of facilities and structures, conflicts of user priorities, accessibility for unauthorized use (mostly motorcycles on trails), lack of surveillance, and public relations personnel.

All authorized recreational uses within the park are considered currently appropriate and desirable. For reasons of under use, and higher demand for alternate use of park space, future phase-outs are appropriate for golf and camping. Non-recreational and non park specific use of prime locations is considered inappropriate, as in the case of the maintenance work yard and storage building.

#### SITE ANALYSIS/USE AREAS

For site analysis and planning purposes the site has been divided into the following 12 planning units. These units are based on major existing areas of use and development on the site. They will, form the basis for all further discussion of planning recommendations.

Unit A receives active but specialized seasonal use. In summer there is full weeknight scheduling of its two softball fields for league use and informal use on weekends; and heavy scheduling of its 4 tennis courts for classes, with some additional informal use. In 1979, four more tennis courts and a parking lot for 16 cars will be completed adjacent to the existing tennis courts, making this a major tennis facility attraction.

In winter, the tennis courts are sometimes converted to a lighted hockey rink which is used informally for practice. The area's permanent service building, containing restrooms, warmup area and food concessions is used only for its restrooms, and only in the summer. At present the area has unpaved access off North Pine Street, and informal parking which often overflows onto the street. It has no facilities for picnicking or neighborhood uses, and is essentially isolated from the rest of the park by a large expanse of natural lowland and woodland. It is anticipated that 6th Street will be extended to Bragaw along the north boundary of the park. This will provide potential future street and neighborhood access from the northwest.

The adjoining unit B just to the south, has been developed with four softball fields, an automatic turf irrigation system, paved two way entrance road, and parking for 80 cars. Previously, this area had been used as a land fill and snow dump site.

These improvements in units A and B are shifting the former "out of the way" character of this portion of the park to a much more active, visible, accessible and heavily visited mode of use. The area is now prime for development of picnicking, play and neighborhood access facilities, as well as for establishing trail connections to the rest of the park.

Unit C, the Lion's Camper Park, used only during the summer, is a drive-in public campground. It serves a mix of local, state and out of state visitors. It has 50 to 65 camper spaces, two permanent restrooms, laundry, and shower facilities. The area has a year-round live-in caretaker residing in a mobile home. The area is closed from September through May. ▼

Attendance figures show the area to be under-used. It is actively utilized only four months out of the year, and even at peak times it is not more than 2/3 to 3/4 full. The area is also very much in need of rehabilitation and renovation throughout.

Based on existing access, layout, structures and utilities, this area has excellent potential for conversion to a more high demand, year round use such as day, overnight and weekend camping serving community youth recreation programs. The existing use can be more appropriately handled elsewhere.

Unit D contains a small entrance road off DeBarr, (which has been paved this summer with the widening of DeBarr), an unpaved parking area for about 15 cars, one picnic shelter, one permanent restroom, a well house, ten day-camping/picnicking areas in the woods, interconnecting foot paths, and several old pit outhouses which need upgrading. These facilities are located along the top of a broad ridge among strikingly

dense stands of pure birch forest. The area is well protected from visual or noise intrusions from surrounding roads or development, and has strong qualities of seclusion and natural beauty.

The area is greatly under-used having been essentially closed to public use in the past. It is open only during the month of June for use by the girl Scouts for daily and occasional overnight camping. This traditional use has been continued since the mid 1950's with attendance of 600 girls per summer.

Vandalism is very high in the area, both winter and summer, probably due to lack of visitation, isolation and disrepair of facilities. The area could appropriately continue at the same level of development, with the road opened to informal public parking and walk-in picnicking and hiking after the day camping sessions in June.

Unit E, immediately west of unit D daycamping/picnic area, has a picnic shelter, permanent restroom, an isolated paved parking area for 40 cars, and is connected by dirt road to the daycamp parking area. The entire area is virtually unused during the summer, due to closure of the entrance road. With the paving of the entrance road from DeBarr, the area can be improved as a developed picnic area, including facilities for group and family picnicking, paved trail connections to existing bike trails, and open space lawn areas.

Unit F is a highly visible corner of the park at the intersection of DeBarr and Boniface. It consists of a triangle of leveled, cleared land, approximately 600' by 300', making an abrupt contrast to the surrounding natural forest and topography of the park. The bike trail runs along the west edge of the triangle at the base of a 15 to 30 foot cut bank. This exposed slope at the edge of the woods is gradually re-vegetating with alders. The area has not been developed for park purposes. It has recently been used as a storage area for highway construction heavy equipment. As part of widening of DeBarr, a bus stop pullout has been constructed on the south edge of the area. Because of its visibility and accessibility to trails, street crossings and public transportation, the area is suitable for landscaping, reforestation, lawn/open space, pedestrian access plaza, and parking for trail access.

Unit G is comprised of all the naturally vegetated area throughout the north half of the park (around and between units A-F). There is one paved bike trail along Boniface on the east edge, and the area is crisscrossed by several informal foot trails which are used by summer daycampers, and hikers.

The area has great natural beauty, particularly on the higher ground which is heavily wooded with healthy stands of birch. The large level lowlands covered with black spruce bog forest have potential for development of additional active sports fields and parking. There is also potential for new road access to this north area to be brought in

from 6th Avenue and/or from Boniface at the northeast corner of the park. The existing foot trails in the higher area are suitable for bike/ski trails and could be winter lighted.

Unit H has been in use, mainly by Parks and Recreation staff, since 1969. The area adjoins the major park entrance. It contains the municipal greenhouse, park maintenance shed, and sizeable fenced maintenance/storage yard. These facilities occupy a large level area on the crest of a hill which is one of the most scenic and central areas in the park.

Visitor use of the area and facilities is limited to year-round greenhouse visitation, with limited parking space. Visitor attendance ranges from ten to 50 individuals a day, and up to 100 to 200 a day from public school tours. The greenhouses are functioning at full capacity as growing houses to supply municipal needs for office plants and outdoor bedding plants for city beautification. They have a small tropical plants display hall. The maintenance shed and yard is directly adjoined by attractive open space which sees heavy year round use by golfers and skiers, whose paths skirt the periphery of the yard. At this point, while fulfilling a very necessary function, the maintenance yard in this location is an intrusion on an area of prime scenic and recreational potential. It could be relocated to a more appropriate place at the periphery of the park, freeing that area for development as a recreational

oriented special visitor attraction compatible with the greenhouse, scenery, access, and pedestrian uses already existing there. This facility could include an expanded tropical house, outdoor demonstration gardens of native and ornamental plants, and scenic view plazas.

Looking also to the future, this location at the top of DeBarr hill has excellent potential for a pedestrian overpass spanning DeBarr Road. This would connect the greenhouse/arboretum area directly to the northern picnic areas, trails, and future facilities.

Unit I is currently the hub of year-round recreational use within the park. It contains the park's only major entrance road and year round parking area. The area consists of approximately 30 acres of open lawn spaces with groves and woodlands of native trees on rolling topography. There are excellent scenic views in all directions from the road, parking area, and lawns along the crest of the hill. Recreational facilities in the area consist of a 25 acre, nine hole golf course, a five acre lighted ski hill with rope tow (hill capacity approximately 150 skiers at a time), a rough graded sliding hill, a lighted, paved bike/ski trail, ticket booth, and ski chalet (warmup, restrooms, food service, storage) located down over the hill from the parking area. There are also two small houses along the road, currently used as residences for greenhouse personnel.

In winter the lighted trail and open areas are attracting more and more

cross-country ski use by individuals, classes and special events. The ski hill and rope tow are often at or above capacity during peak use periods. Sliding hill attendance figures show almost as much use there as the ski hill, even though this facility is less well developed and somewhat hazardous. During peak winter use periods (good weather on weekends and holidays) the available parking space is not adequate to serve all three uses, or major events.

The entire 30 acres of open space in unit I in the summer are utilized days and evenings as a golf course. Any other uses of this space are threatened by the hazards of flying golf balls. Even so, during summer off hours, and in spring and fall, people do use the open space for informal activities. In the summer, also, visitors park at the central parking lot and use the trail head access to the bike and hiking trails.

If operated at fullest capacity (a party of four leaving every five minutes for eight hours), the golf course could accommodate 385 people per day. Actual attendance figures show an average attendance of under 100 people per day, with peak use at 200 people per day. The course is generally used at 1/4 to 1/3 capacity. This combination of under-use and limited overall capacity is especially significant because of the demand, and potential capacity, of this 30 acres for many other recreational uses. There is only one other area within the Municipality with open lawn space of close comparable

size. This is Delaney Park with 22 1/2 acres of open lawn space. It is estimated that use of Delaney reaches at least 1000 to 1500 people per day during good summer weather evenings and weekends. At least one-third of these are pursuing informal recreation. In addition, the park strip open space serves informal sports practice, large special events, ceremonies, and concerts. There is a need to relieve this heavy use pressure now focused on Delaney Park. As shown by recent recreation surveys, Anchorage residents place highest preference and priority on outdoor, unorganized activities, including picnicking, walking, hiking, and bicycling. Open space area in Russian Jack Park has accessibility, abundant attractive natural features, and expansive lawns. It can provide opportunities for all these activities, at such time as the golfing facilities can be provided elsewhere. Such a change of use would be appropriate and desirable within the next five to ten years. In the meantime, the golf course facility could be upgraded to attract highest use, or phased into a part time schedule to allow multiple summer use of the area.

The spacious slopes of the ski hill with their scenic backdrop of woods and mountains, lend themselves very well to use as a summer outdoor amphitheatre. A concert shell could be located at the edge of the woods, leaving an open area for informal lawn seating for summer performances, while not interfering with winter skiing. Located thus, the amphitheatre could take advantage of the existing parking lot at the top of the hill. In addition, this area is subject to very little outside noise disturbance.

The chalet building, in unit I, though needed in the past for service and support functions, has received heavy and repeated vandalism. It has been closed to all but restroom use. A mobile food service located near the chalet has temporarily filled the need for quick food service. It appears that the main problem with the chalet is its location for this type of use. This type of a support facility should more appropriately be located at the top of the hill adjacent to or on a portion of the parking lot. This would optimize access, surveillance, maintenance and scenic views. For increased efficiency, the other support facilities (rope tow machinery, ticket booth and future rental shops) could be incorporated into the same structure. The chalet, in its present location would be more suitable and appropriate as a picnic shelter, as it is a very pleasant spot for summer visitors. It could be converted to this use by retaining the basic beam and roof structure but removing the walls.

The present park entrance road to unit I off of DeBarr hill is both too small in scale and too hazardous in design and location to adequately serve as the major park entrance. It requires hillside left turns across major five lane thoroughfare traffic with a blind hilltop within 400 feet. The entrance/exit is a narrow two lane width on the east and a steep drop off on the west. Immediately inside the park the road starts up another hill. All these factors make the vehicular access particularly hazardous in the winter, when snow is deep and park use is at its heaviest.

A portion of the road bed, in its present location at the base of the greenhouse could function appropriately as a parking area for greenhouse staff, while the main entrance could be relocated and brought in off Pine Street, to curve up the hill and meet the existing hilltop road. The existing terminal parking area is adequate for present uses, except peak winter weekends. In the future this could be supplemented with additional parking in other locations.

In addition to the recreational facilities in unit I there are two small houses located on the hilltop next to the entrance road. These structures are presently utilized as family residences for greenhouse staff. There is a definite need for a live-in caretaker at the greenhouse, especially in the winter, but having two such facilities is a duplication of effort. One or both residences could appropriately be moved, or converted to visitor/service/recreational use. The same considerations apply to the large metal building located near the parking area. At present it provides much needed storage for park maintenance activities, but is unnecessarily located in a prime scenic and recreational area.

There is also an old root cellar structure about 30'x15'x12' high, in the hillside near the well house and metal building. The outer portions of the structure are unsightly and hazardous. This facility still functions very well as a naturally temperature controlled storage area. (It never goes below 32°). Possibilities for putting this

facility to constructive use should be investigated.

Unit J has been developed exclusively for picnicking and trail use. It is wooded, hilly terrain. An entrance off Boniface leads to two small parking lots, each serving a picnic shelter and restroom. It is a one way loop road with several family picnic pullouts. The paved, lighted bike/ski trail runs through the area and a network of smaller foot/ski paths crisscross the wooded hills and valleys. In the summer, the two upper picnicking areas receive heavy and constant use throughout the season, both at the small family picnic pullouts along the one way road, and at the upper picnic shelter. The shelter, parking lot, and restrooms are used for scheduled day camp sessions and scheduled group picnics, as well as informal picnics and gatherings. This area, because of its combination of vehicular access and wooded seclusion, attracts vandalism and rowdy parties at unscheduled times. Also, because of its hilltop location and surrounding woods, the facility is limited and somewhat cramped as far as usability or flexibility of space. Picnic areas can be developed near the shelter, and part of the paved parking lot can be converted to informal court games. This area also has a prominent natural feature which could be tied in with the picnic areas and shelter and emphasized as an interpretive and aesthetic attraction. This is the knoll just north of the shelter which is the highest point in the park. There is also potential for development of a view tower. In the future, as other more expansive group picnic areas are developed in other areas of the park, the use of this area

could be shifted towards controlled access, interpretation, and family picnicking.

There are some hazards and conflicts arising out of summer use of the one way loop drive. The road is narrow and family picnic pullouts and tables are very close to the roadway. At present, there is no speed control and considerable "hot rodding" through the loop. Also, the lower half of the loop doubles as bike trail, resulting in conflicts between skiers, bikes, and cars. Installation of speed bumps in the roadway would ameliorate the hazard, while a separate section of bike trail parallel to the road would greatly improve summer use conditions in the area. The family picnicking pullouts are very much in need of renovation including better surfacing and delineation of parking. Some additional individual picnic areas could be established up the hill from the parking.

The lower picnic shelter, though in more level terrain, receives very little use or demand in the summer. The parking lot is small and inefficiently laid out. The shelter is far away from the parking lot and barely visible. The open space is gravelly and unimproved, with access to the area from the parking lot awkward and unattractive. With improvements the area has excellent potential as a group picnic area. An attractive and sizeable lawn area could be opened up between the parking lot, the existing shelter, and the restrooms. An additional shelter could be added nearer the parking lot at the edge of the lawn. This would give the area the ability to accommodate a variety of picnicking

and open space needs, yet retain the natural beauty of the woodland surroundings.

In winter, the entire unit J, and surrounding woodlands are utilized for cross country skiing with some snowshoeing, and walking on packed trails. The lighted bike/ski trail receives winter maintenance, and is a major corridor for informal and class skiing. There is also active skiing of the wooded hilly trails for recreation and training. In the past, this entrance and parking lot off Boniface have remained closed in the winter. Because of the great increase of cross country ski use, and the increased pressure on the ski hill parking lot in unit I, people have begun leaving their cars along the edge of Boniface outside this barricaded entrance, or entering the park on foot across Boniface. The entrance and lower parking lot in unit J is lighted, accessible for ploughing, and could appropriately be opened for winter parking with direct access to the ski trails. A winter barricade could be placed at the inner edge of the lot closing off the loop road and confining vehicles to the lower lot only. This would serve the need for more winter vehicular access as well as eliminate hazardous parking along Boniface Parkway. The entrance off Boniface Parkway is hazardous, requiring reduction in speed and a cramped turn uphill to get into the parking area. As the picnicking facilities are further developed, and parking opened for winter use, this entrance should be adequately signed and eventually enlarged or improved.

Unit K is the large expanse of natural, undeveloped land east and

south of the golf course. It is wooded, rolling terrain, and contains the springs and stream, as well as natural bog areas and a pond.

There are footpaths throughout the area, and the paved bike/ski trail runs the length of the area from the southwest to the northeast. It connects to the parking lot in unit I and to the north half by way of a tunnel under DeBarr Road. The level of trail development in this area is well balanced between paved/lighted main trail and informal foot trails. In the future, an additional bike trail connection could run through the woods from the existing trail near unit J to tie to the golf course open space.

The entire area sees summer and winter use of the trails for walking, hiking, jogging, bicycling, nature study, berry picking, mushrooming, skiing, and snowshoeing. The bike/ski trail is heavily used, mostly informally, but occasionally for organized programs or special events.

The natural springs, bogs and ponds in the area represent a unique natural feature to be preserved and emphasized. There are also several different plant communities and ecological habitats within the immediate area. There exists excellent potential for developing a nature trail with interpretive facilities near the springs.

Unit L is a large, naturally wooded lowland between the greenhouse/golf course hill and the west border of the park. There is a footpath which receives some use by hikers, skiers, and neighborhood residents.

The area is surrounded on all sides by natural or manmade barriers and as yet has no well developed access. To the east and south are steep hillsides and heavy vegetation, with the creek making an additional barrier to the south. On the north border is the high, steep bank of DeBarr Road. There is no access to or from the bike trail which now runs along DeBarr. To the west is the undeveloped Pine Street right-of-way. The area has great natural beauty in its thick birch woods and fine stand of large spruce along the creek.

The existing main footpath through the woods could very appropriately be developed as a lighted paved bike/ski trail with connections into the existing trail and the ski/golf hill area. This would greatly magnify the usability of the existing trail system by creating in the south half of the park a complete large loop, as well as new accessibility from several points. In the future, this trail could continue north under DeBarr to connect with facilities in the north half of the park, completing a parkwide loop trail system.

The north corner of the area, at DeBarr and Pine, is level lowland with black spruce bog vegetation. Though still natural, this area is impacted by the noise and visibility of DeBarr Road. There exists a need for development of a major park entrance road entering off Pine Street, and skirting the lowland area to join the existing hilltop road.

Also indicated is a need for small neighborhood oriented picnic/play open spaces near the west border of the park. To minimize encroachment on the woods, these could be located near the future entrance road, and at the open area at the Southwest corner of the site.

# 4. THE PLAN



## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

### ° Park Type and Size:

Russian Jack Springs Park, due to its size, is designated as a major regional park. It should be planned to serve the entire Anchorage region by providing maximum recreational development without sacrificing the natural character of the site.

### ° Park Character:

Russian Jack Springs can truly be considered an urban park in the sense that it is highly accessible, well known, and centrally located in the Anchorage Bowl. As Anchorage grows and develops, the urban character of the park and its surroundings will increase. The park should be planned for intensive visitation, serving a large community in a variety of ways, and with an increasing level of facility development.

### ° Varied Demand Factors:

As a major "urban regional park" located adjacent to residential neighborhoods, the park must serve many types of recreational needs. These include sports leagues, growing numbers of outside visitors, special interest groups, and individuals living in nearby neighborhoods. It must function concurrently as a regional, community, neighborhood, and "vest pocket" park. The intent of

the planning process is to "fit" the demand for use to the physical opportunities of the site.

### ° Park in Relation to its Surroundings:

As well as relating to other parks in the community system, a park must be planned for compatibility with its immediate surroundings.

The master plan has considered the influence to existing or proposed land uses adjacent to the site. Russian Jack Park is surrounded on all sides by extensive residential neighborhoods, with a major traffic barrier along the east border and some commercial use does exist adjacent to the park. The master plan incorporates and reflects the needs, problems, and potentials generated by the adjacent land uses.

### ° Park Identity and Unique Features:

Every park, like every person, has its own combination of features and qualities which make it unique. A well planned park will capitalize on its unique features, thereby enhancing the park's individual identity and attraction to visitors. The plan has sought to identify, protect, and emphasize the site's history, open space, amenities, natural features, scale, location, and recreational potential. These factors have contributed to Russian Jack's special appeal to the community. Future modifications to the plan should keep these considerations as a major objective.

° Overall Intent/Visitation Levels:

It is the intent of the plan to encourage a variety of uses and user types. The plan reflects Russian Jack's potential to be an "all day park". It is in concept similar to large urban parks in other major cities. The plan provides for a combination of facilities and attractions, variety of open spaces, natural features and supporting facilities which visitors can use and enjoy for an hour, several hours, or a whole day.

° Seasonal Characteristics:

Anchorage's long winters and cool summers require special consideration in planning the use of park lands. Dramatic seasonal changes result in a diversity of aesthetic contrasts, multiple use of facilities, "recovery time" for impacted natural systems, and increased maintenance time for winterizing.

The plan has attempted to capitalize on the potentials and opportunities created by popular seasonal activities, and provide for increased multiple use of seasonal areas.

The plan has also attempted to solve major season-related problems by recommending changes in use, location, or current policy in critical areas, to encourage park visitation and use daily and seasonally.

° Intended Levels of Preservation and Development:

Abundant birch and spruce woodland, scenic vistas, varied topography, unspoiled water courses, and animal habitats constitute major attractions of this site for recreational purposes.

The plan considers preservation of these natural features as one of its main objectives. All facilities and use areas have been located to fit into and around woodlands, topography, and streams with minimum disturbance.

Recommendations have been made to correct existing problems and hazards, and all future design and construction is to be carried out so as to avoid problems such as soil erosion, exposed cut banks, tree damage, wind throw of trees, disturbances of underbrush and animal habitat, interference with natural stream flow, or excessive trash and automobile exhaust pollution.

In 1978, existing developed or disturbed areas and trails occupied approximately 22% of the site. Completion of all new facilities recommended in the plan would convert an additional 16% of the land to developed use areas and trails. Thus, the site at its highest recommended use and development level would have a ratio of approximately 38% developed area to 62% natural area.

o Land Use Percentages (Park Wide):

Existing

Trails	1.4%	
Golf Course, road, parking, ski hill	4.4	
Greenhouse (future arboretum)	2.1	
Ballfields and tennis	10.2	
Camper Parks	1.7	
Picnic areas and parking	2.0	
Developed	= 21.8%	= 70 acres
Natural land	= 78.2%	= 250 acres
Total	= 100.0%	= 320 acres

Proposed

Indoor facilities/parking areas	2.0%
Intensive sports area	9.6
Roads and parking areas	1.2
Neighborhood play areas	1.7
Picnic area expansion	0.5
Trails	1.2
	<u>16.2%</u>

Developed	= 38.2%	= 122 acres
Natural Land	= 61.8%	= 198 acres
Total	= 100.0	= 320 acres

o Time Frame, Flexibility and Updating:

The plan is projected within a time frame of two to 20 years. It establishes a sound decision making basis for immediate improvements, and the establishment of a basic access and circulation pattern around which recommended development can occur.

Phases of development have been recommended. These range from small scale immediate improvements, through near-future changes in use policies and moderate scale development, to long range shifts in emphasis and use, and construction of major facilities.

It is extremely important that the plan remain current, flexible and responsive to future changes in park conditions and user needs. To accomplish this, the master plan should be reviewed, updated, and integrated with the overall Park System Master Plan and other current planning at least every five years.

o Energy Conservation:

All future planning, design, construction, and management of the park should make use of current innovative concepts and available technology to minimize energy and water consumption.

Approaches to these problems include 1) stressing public transit access to the park, 2) keeping internal roads and parking to a minimum, 3) recirculating water in the greenhouses and arboretum, 4) conserving water and labor with efficient irrigation systems for turf areas, 5) utilizing solar and other energy sources, and 6) installing energy-efficient and nonpolluting toilet systems of chemical, or composting types.

° Park in Relation to Overall Park System:

This park, although a large and self-contained entity in itself, must also be considered as a single component of a much larger system. Future planning for the park should tie in with an overall plan yet to be completed for the entire municipal park system, balancing needs for park land and recreational facilities on a community wide basis.

° Linkage to Other Parks and Facilities

Future planning must strive, as much as possible, to link various components of the Municipal parks through transportation systems.

Every site is enhanced and enlarged by having a direct link, even by single trail, to another park. Users may move at will from one center of interest to another. It is hoped that eventually most of our major parks and greenbelts can be linked, either physically with trails and use easements, or by special components of our transportation system. This plan indicates the linking and tying together of the two separated halves of the site itself, as well as indicating critical areas for future linkages to nearby neighborhood parks, greenbelts, bike trails and public transportation access points.

° Coordination with Other Departments and Agencies:

In preparation of this plan, a concerted effort was made to gather and incorporate input from all departments and agencies involved

in planning, use, maintenance, resource management and policy making for the park.

Especially helpful was input from:

Department of Cultural and Recreational Services  
Parks and Recreation Division  
Recreation Section  
Greenhouse Section  
Department of Public Works  
Building Maintenance Section  
The Nordic Ski Club of Anchorage

Other departments and agencies which contributed to the plan include:

Russian Jack Park Community Council  
Snowmobile Association  
Golf Association  
Girl Scouts/Susitna Council  
Caretakers/Lions Camper Park  
Anchorage Softball Association  
Planning Department/Historian  
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (Water Quality Studies)  
U.S. Soil Conservation Services  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Department of Environmental Quality  
United States Geological Survey  
Heritage, Conservation and Recreation Service

It is recommended that future planning, and development plans, continue to actively incorporate input from these sources. Since the former BOR contributed to most existing facilities within the park, future planning must be cognizant of requirements attached to this funding.

## SITE DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

### o Major Facilities:

In planning the overall system of relationships of activities and areas within the site, three general categories of user spaces were visualized; 1) nodes, 2) informal spaces, and 3) corridors.

"Nodes" are stationary, permanent areas of concentrated use with parking and facilities which are heavily visited, and used for specific recreational activities. Examples of nodes would be tennis courts, sport fields, indoor facilities, picnic shelters, play areas, ski hills, and fishing docks.

"Informal spaces" are open areas in which park users are free to roam at will throughout the space and use it in their own way. Often in this case, the space itself is the attraction, offering a feeling of freedom and contrast from everyday structured life. In Russian Jack informal spaces consist of open lawns with groves of trees. In some areas snow cover may create an open winter use area where underbrush might prevent such use in summer.

"Corridors" include any space in which users travel along a linear path to go from one node or informal space to another. Roads, trails, paths, sidewalks, and hallways are corridors. A corridor can be strictly functional, such as maintenance access and fire

roads, or it can be planned and laid out as a recreational attraction. The latter may be accomplished by considering 1) the sequence of experience, 2) the destination, and 3) the features of interest along the way. Corridors of recreational attraction should be functional, providing access and aesthetic experiences to park visitors.

The park should contain major activity nodes with vehicular access and centralized parking. Vehicular penetration into the site should be kept to a minimum, with large natural areas reserved for a well developed network of (foot/bike/ski) trails.

Recreational development in the park will follow major themes, each different in orientation and character, but complementary to each other.

Two major parkwide recreational themes will be picnicking, and trail use. Large group picnic areas with separate vehicular access and parking, shelters, barbecues and adjoining lawn play areas can be provided or upgraded in several locations.

A winter/summer trail system can provide extensive paved and unpaved paths through a variety of terrain and vegetation types, with connections to all facilities throughout the developed areas. It should be accessible from every border of the park as well as from each internal parking area, and will enable users to pass freely between the two halves of the park by way of three separated grade crossings at DeBarr Road. Approximately three miles of the trail system will be lighted

for winter use, creating a large circuit spanning both halves of the park. Bicycle and cross country ski rental concessions can be provided, utilizing the trail system and attracting casual visitor use.

In the northwest portion of the north half, fields for softball, volleyball, soccer, football, and rugby, and courts for basketball and tennis are planned. Vehicular access, parking, and service facilities to accommodate heavy use by groups, sports leagues, and spectators can be constructed. In keeping with an active sports orientation, the area can eventually include a major municipal indoor recreation sports facility for year round, city-wide use containing swimming pools, weight rooms, sauna, basketball and handball courts. A portion of this facility might also be designed as a community center in response to community needs. A recreation center facility, along with a nearby ice skating rink, winter parking area, and potential small sled hill, can provide a major node of winter access and use. Two existing camping areas can be adapted and oriented toward day and overnight camping for local youth recreation groups. The two areas should remain separated from the main sports use area, though connected to it by bike trails. Both areas will have direct vehicular access as well as access from the bike trail system.

The south portion can provide attractions for visitation with a more informal emphasis. The major summer attraction as a golf course

should eventually be replaced by open space, with large spacious lawns and mountain vistas for picnicking and play. A special facility complementary to this use would be an amphitheatre. A band shell facing a spacious sloping lawn will accommodate the demand for outdoor musical and theatrical events. Also, an arboretum with display gardens, conservatory, and greenhouse is proposed. Vehicular activity in the area would be confined to a single two-way, year round, access corridor with centralized parking. This half of the park will also remain the hub of winter activities, with a tropical house, facilities for downhill skiing, and hill sliding. In later phases of the plan, the chalet can be phased into a picnic shelter and viewing deck. A central visitor, concession, and operations facility for year round use can be constructed at the top of the rope tow at the edge of the parking lot. This structure would contain the rope tow operation, ticket booths, golf, ski and bicycle rentals, food service, restrooms, eating area, warmup area, and public telephones.

It is recommended that the use of the two existing houses as residences be phased out. One of the structures could be moved to the edge of the ski hill to serve as the basic central service building. The other could serve as park headquarters, with meeting room, and caretaker quarters.

A major recreational use to be emphasized is play. The plan proposes a series of creative play areas associated with picnic facilities.

These are intended to serve the needs of nearby neighborhood children, as well as other visitors and bike trail users.

Four play areas will be located at the park periphery in areas with suitable conditions and convenient neighborhood access. Four more will be located in conjunction with group picnic and daycamping areas. One more, a major play attraction of community wide interest will be developed just north of the intensive sports area near 6th Avenue. This is a central location, convenient by bike trail for children from east, north and west of the park, as well as children accompanying users of the sports facilities. This area should receive special design consideration as an outstanding, innovative, unique play place of a scale to handle heavy and repeated visitation. It should function as an attraction in itself, with picnic tables, open play lawn and parking nearby.

As a further recreational attraction for children, it is recommended that the stream be stocked with fish and a fishing dock be developed at the pond on the south border.

#### o Access and Circulation:

The system of access and circulation is critical to the successful functioning of a park. A greater choice of types of transportation, access and circulation modes, promotes a richer mix and diversity of park uses and users.

Visitors must be able to enter, and leave the park with maximum safety and convenience. To this end, special attention must be given to design and location of entrances and exits. The plan is addressed to the following considerations:

- How do people get to the park?
- Where and how do they get into the park?
- Are entrances and exits safe, visible, and of appropriate scale for intended use?
- Has access from public transportation been incorporated into the plan?
- How do people get to their destination facilities within the park?
- Is there adequate parking space for anticipated use levels... is parking in the best location?
- Is there access and turnaround for maintenance vehicles and busses - at proper locations?
- How do park users get from one activity node to another within the park?
- Is there traffic congestion?
- Are there conflict points between vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians?
- Is there a comprehensive signing program, for direction and orientation?
- Is the system functional for all uses in all seasons?

At the final stage of development, each half of the park should have one main entrance with a short, scenic two way road to parking at major use areas. These main entrances will be located off

Pine Street, on the west border of the park, thus the major flow of vehicular traffic into the park will use the intersection at Pine and DeBarr, rather than the existing hazardous cross traffic hillside entrance near the greenhouse. When these entrances are completed, the intersection at Pine and DeBarr will likely require a traffic light.

It is recommended that the existing greenhouse entrance eventually be phased out, and the roadway used for internal access and parking lot for park personnel. The entrance area at DeBarr could be converted to an east bound bus pullout and pedestrian rest area to provide direct pedestrian access to the nearby central use areas.

The new entrance road off Pine can serve a new parking and turnaround area at the arboretum, and connect to the existing road to the ski hill parking area.

Internal vehicular circulation in the south half can be confined to its existing level, with no additional roads recommended. This will continue to preserve the majority of the area for pedestrian use and natural conditions. In later phases of the plan, additional parking can be developed as necessary along the existing road between the arboretum and ski hill.

The new main vehicular access corridor off Pine Street in the north

half now serves a large parking lot at the new ballfields. It will eventually continue on and split into two branches: one serving a large terminal parking lot and turnaround at the indoor sports facility, the other creating a small road winding through the sports fields complex connecting through to 6th Avenue. This will provide maximum access and parking flexibility for this high use area.

Existing access to the picnic areas off Boniface should remain, and be upgraded for improved visibility and ease of entry. A minor parking area could eventually be developed in the disturbed area at 20th and Glacier to serve the south border trail entrance with the possibility of another one near 20th and Glacier-Pine to serve the pond fishing and trail entrance.

The two existing secondary entrances for parking to the tennis courts off Pine, and to the day camping area off DeBarr, should be retained. Improvements to paving, signing and parking barricades can be made.

Two new access points are recommended to serve future needs as the north half of the park is further developed. One would enter off 6th Avenue near Pine, to serve the neighborhood play and picnic areas and connect to parking for the game fields, while the other would enter the northeast corner of the park off Boniface just south of 6th. This will provide a much needed access into the park for visitors from the northeast area. This entry will serve an improved entrance to the camper/day camp park (eliminating the existing hazardous entrances off Boniface and making a controlled, self contained unit

out of the camper park area). It will continue on far enough to bring visitors to parking at the new major neighborhood play area and game field/sports complex. This is intended strictly as secondary access. Under no circumstances should it be made part of a through road system, which would encourage traffic cutting through the park from North Boniface to Pine and DeBarr. This new entrance should be provided with a traffic light on Boniface, to provide a safe crossing for pedestrians east of Boniface and to control vehicular entry turns.

When the park is fully developed, it is envisioned that both halves of the park will have one major winter access off Pine, and one peripheral winter access off Boniface, on opposite sides of the park, thus to ensure dispersal of skier parking and ease of access from all directions.

In the near future, winter access should be maintained for the greenhouses and the ski hill area, and the Boniface entrance to the picnic areas should be opened up for winter use. The corner at DeBarr and Boniface can be used for winter cross country ski parking and trail access.

In later phases of the plan, major winter parking and access can be maintained at the Indoor sports facility off Pine Street, with the secondary access off Boniface to the youth camping area (Lion's Camper Park) and adjacent parking areas in the northeast corner.

The DeBarr/Boniface corner parking could be phased out or retained as future needs require.

Access and connections with public transportation should be developed along DeBarr for both eastbound and westbound busses. To be required are bus pullouts, lighting, warmup enclosure, benches, and paved connections to the park trail system. It is recommended that when the existing south entrance road is phased out, its entrance way be converted to a pullout for eastbound busses. This would provide the most direct pedestrian visitor access to the arboretum and ski/open space areas. Bus connection and rest stop areas should also be provided at the main entrance along North Pine.

In order to accommodate group and organization visitation, bus entrances, dropoff zones and turnarounds should be included in the development of the north large group picnic area off DeBarr, the north winter/summer camping area off Boniface, the north intensive sports complex, and the south arboretum and ski/golf open space area.

Visitors coming to the park on foot or bike should have a choice of many different access points around the borders of the park. All pedestrian trail access points are planned so as to minimize conflicts with vehicular traffic. Pedestrian entrances from the east, across Boniface at 6th and at 20th, should have traffic light intersections or grade separated crossings. Entrances off North Pine should have marked crossings with signing control. Entrances from the north, south and

southwest borders are off of low traffic, dead-end residential streets requiring no special treatment.

The major pedestrian access and circulation problem in Russian Jack Park is due to the high banks and heavy traffic on the hill along DeBarr Road. The local community has voiced considerable concern about children from northwest neighborhoods having to cross DeBarr on skis, bikes, and foot to get to the existing major park facilities with no protection or separation from traffic.

The plan presents an improved internal access/circulation system with two additional grade separated crossings of DeBarr including a bike trail tunnel near the west border (similar to existing one at east border) and a trail overpass spanning the high banks at the crest of the hill tying the greenhouse/arboretum area directly to future picnicking areas, trails, and sports facilities north of DeBarr. Both these crossings are located in conjunction with existing road cut banks so as to require practically no additional cut or fill.

It is the intent of the plan to provide an independent bicycle and pedestrian circulation system which will enable visitors to travel freely throughout the park without conflict with vehicles or street crossings. To achieve this end, the new entrance road in the south half can incorporate a grade separated crossing for a bike trail, and crossings of secondary access roads can be signed and

striped, with speed bumps in the road.

Bike rest stops, parking and lockups are designated at all major facilities. One major "bike-in" picnic and open play area is located at the junction of three bike trails on the open lower fairway lawn southeast of the arboretum area. Here groups and individual bicyclists and strollers can congregate, rest, picnic, use the open space in a peaceful setting removed from cars, parking or roads.

Another major bike and pedestrian rest stop is recommended in conjunction with the bus stop in the north-west corner of the DeBarr/Boniface intersection. This area can be developed as an inviting plaza with landscaping, open lawn, seating, a shelter and interesting entrances from the bike trail, the adjacent bus stop pullout, and crosswalks from the shopping center across Boniface.

◦ Support Facilities:

Small, convenient, quick food services are an important component of an active, heavily visited recreational facility. An attractive food service contributes to an air of festivity and relief from every day routine. These facilities can be a significant factor in encouraging more and longer visits to the park.

Food service concessions should be planned and located for ease of maintenance and cleanup. They should be designed to provide attractive

eating areas for winter or summer use as appropriate. They should be located to minimize vandalism during off season times.

The plan recommends at least one food service concession to be centrally located in each major use node. Existing facilities are to be used initially. Optimum locations have been recommended for new food service areas and facilities in later phases of development. In some cases these will be permanent facilities incorporated into multi-use structures, in other cases seasonal mobile concessions can be allowed at designated locations.

Like food services, rest stations have been designated at appropriate locations to serve both year round and seasonal activities. The plan recommends that permanent rest stations be maintained only at multipurpose facilities or immediately adjacent to parking areas in year round major use areas.

A permanent rest station with convenient indoor and outdoor access can be incorporated into the arboretum/tropical house visitor area, the indoor sports facility, and the golf/ski area central service building. A permanent heated restroom can also be maintained at the summer/winter youth camping facility. All other restrooms should be part of a system of portable units installed for seasonal use in locations designated by the plan. As a general policy, these units can be situated on permanent pads directly adjacent to

parking lots, visible to users, with attractive landscaping for partial screening. They should be regularly serviced, and removed at the end of the season, or during extended periods of under utilization.

The existing permanent restrooms in the park are located in secluded areas where they receive heavy vandalism and are inconvenient for maintenance access. Better access and visibility for these restrooms can be incorporated into the expansion of group picnic areas during the first phases of the plan. At the end of their useful life these facilities should be removed, and portable systems installed. It is felt that this treatment can provide maximum convenience and aesthetic consideration for park users while minimizing overall vandalism, maintenance and construction costs.

Drinking fountains should be provided in conjunction with food service facilities and group picnic areas. Utility water spigots for maintenance and cleanup should serve each picnic shelter and permanent restroom, as well as outdoor food service areas, hockey rink, and ice skating area.

Warm-up facilities should be provided at major areas of winter use. In the south half, warm-up facilities can continue for the present to be incorporated in the chalet, and later into a new all purpose facility at the top of the ski hill. In future phases, three warm-up

stations can be developed in the north half, they are 1) a winter camping area (now Lion's Camper Park) with a heated rest-room, 2) a warm-up room with indoor and outdoor access for skiers and ice skaters incorporated into the year-round sports facility, and 3) small warm-up hut maintained near the hockey rink. Several shelters can be provided in group picnic areas in both halves of the park.

Future development should stress maximum access, convenience and efficiency for maintenance, operations and utilities, as well as aesthetic considerations in location and design of structures.

Additional facilities should be incorporated into existing facilities or located inconspicuously as indicated in the plan. Wherever possible they should have direct vehicular access kept separate from visitor access.

The existing maintenance yard and shed near the greenhouse should be relocated within the park to a less prominent location.

Automatic irrigation systems can be installed in the greenhouses and open lawn areas. Utilities should be winterized as necessary.

Further study is required to keep maintenance, operations and utilities responsive to changing recreational uses in the park.

Parking and access for the handicapped should be incorporated into future development of all facilities.

It is recommended that a consistent style of design and choice of materials for benches, picnic tables, shelters, trash receptacles, rest stations, barbecue grills, fencing, barriers, wheel stops, park signs, and interpretive facilities be adopted reflecting the natural character and enhancing the unique identity of the site.

A signing program is a necessary component of any park, particularly a park of the scale, complexity and visitation levels of Russian Jack. The plan recommends a four stage signing program as follows:

- 1) Develop a park sign logo, to be used consistently throughout the park.
- 2) Develop a comprehensive parkwide signing plan to fit the following criteria:
  - a) Serve the access and circulation system by providing direction and orientation at all entrances, intersections, use areas and facilities.
  - b) Function as a complete public information system: informing visitors as to park rules and regulations, safety measures, hours of use, types of use, locations of facilities, etc.
  - c) Serve as an effective year round public relations feature with attractive, visible, coordinated up-to-date signs

promoting visitor awareness, comfort, enjoyment, and utilization of the recreational resource.

- 3) Improve and upgrade signing at existing facilities in accordance with signing criteria.
- 4) Add appropriate signing as a component of all further development within the park, in accordance with the signing program.

#### MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

There are many operational functions which are not addressed by the physical development aspect of this master plan. In order to continue to achieve parkwide objectives it is recommended that consistent management and funding programs be established for all park functions including the following:

##### o Fee Collection

Policies for user and spectator fees should be established, and facilities designed or adapted to provide for fee collection where desired. Consideration should be given to collecting fees per car for parking, as an incentive to encourage alternative modes of transportation, to offset maintenance costs, and to alleviate the parking problem.

##### o Interpretation

The park has a wealth of natural systems and features, and historic uses which lend themselves very well to an interpretation program. Interpretive signs, areas, trails, and views can be developed, as well as brochures, presentations and programs, for residents and out of town visitors. These should be integrated into a comprehensive interpretative program for the entire Anchorage park system.

##### o Insect Control

Non-polluting or minimum polluting methods of mosquito control for early summer, should be investigated. The picnic and day camping areas are especially critical.

##### o Park Security and Public Safety

The establishment of a park ranger program is recommended. A program, supported by the police department, should be investigated. Major emphasis might be on public relations, information, interpretation, and control of vandalism.

##### o Public Relations and Information

Informational talks and slide shows on Municipal park facilities should be developed for presentation to civic and business organizations. A program of media presentations, park brochures, signs, and maps made available in adequate numbers and locations, can be

utilized to promote public awareness and support of the park system.

◦ Public Transit

The establishment of a weekend "park circuit" by the People Mover system is recommended serving major parks, greenbelts, and bike/ski trails. This would consist of a bus route circling through a series of parks, greenbelts, and trail crossings, enabling visitors to spend the day at several parks, or utilizing linear recreational corridors without having to take one or more cars. The system should have bus service passing each given point every hour or half hour for maximum service to users.

Russian Jack is suggested as a major stopping point in this system, providing visitors with rentals of bikes and skis.

◦ Site Use and User Studies

Recent records on use requests and attendance, compiled by the Recreation Section, have been valuable for planning purposes.

At present these present us with a general frame of reference for recreational facilities planning. More detailed data on specific uses and user attitudes within Municipal parks would be invaluable to future planning efforts.

It is recommended that a program of data gathering through

questionnaires and attendance counts be done on a consistent basis.

DEVELOPMENT PHASES

The following are development phase recommendations, based on anticipated user needs and funding resources. They are subject to change and revision whenever appropriate.

PHASE I (first five years)

Units A, B, & G

- Major sports complex.
- Construct small play and picnic areas.
- Improve landscaping, fencing, barricades and signing at existing ballfields and tennis courts.

Unit E

- Develop group picnic area.

Units E & G

- Construct lighted bike/ski trails (1st half of sports complex and hilltop connecting link).
- Improve informal ski/footpaths in woods.

Unit F

- Improve entire area with grading and landscaping.

Unit I

- Improvements to sliding hill (regrading and alignment, add rope tow).
- Improvements to ski hill/golf area (signing and appurtenances).

Unit J

- Develop lower group picnic area open space and facilities.
- Enlarge lower parking lot and provide for winter parking controls.
- Develop interpretive features at high-point.

Unit K

- Develop nature trail.
- Develop neighborhood picnic and play area in southwest corner.
- Rehabilitate disturbed banks along Boniface and DeBarr.

Management Actions

- Adjust summer use of golf course by opening the entire area to informal use on Sundays only. Continuing golf use Monday thru Saturday. Provide sufficient public information on this action.

- Open lower east parking lot (unit J) to winter cross country skier parking. (Move pipe gate barricade from main entrance to ski trail entrance).
- Improve signing throughout area.
- (Possibly open winter parking area in unit F).
- Provide winter portable restroom.
- Review and update Master Plan.

PHASE II

Units A,B,& G

- Construct second phase of bike/ski trails.
- Construct bike trail underpass across DeBarr Road.

Unit G

- Add basketball courts and additional playfields.
- Expand feature play area at Sports Complex.

Unit C

- Convert Lions Camper Park to day/overnight youth camp area.

Unit D

- Improve day camp area for family picnics and/or day camp use.

Unit I

- Develop new all-purpose building at top of ski hill (tickets, concessions, golf/ski service, food service, restrooms, warmup, tow shed, etc).
- Convert chalet to open picnic shelter.
- Construct Amphitheatre and band shell.

Unit J

- Construct bike trail with underpass connection to Nunaka Valley Park.

Unit L

- Construct bike trail to underpass across DeBarr Road

Management Actions

- Phase out golf use completely from Russian Jack Springs Park when other facilities have been developed elsewhere.
- Phase out or relocate maintenance yard and buildings in units H & I.
- Review and update Master Plan.

PHASE III

Unit G

- Construct major Indoor Sports Facility.

- Construct third phase of bike/ski trails.

Units E & I

- Construct overpass across DeBarr Road between Arboretum and north half.

Units L & H

- Construct new access road (convert existing one to bus pullout and greenhouse personnel parking lot.
- Construct Tropical House, Arboretum and parking.

Unit I

- Develop picnicking and lawn game areas on open lawns (former golf fairways).
- Construct bike/ski trail connections to open lawns, arboretum, and overpass.
- Remove residences (if not converted during Phase II).

Management Actions

- Continue and expand all programs.
- Review and update Master Plan.

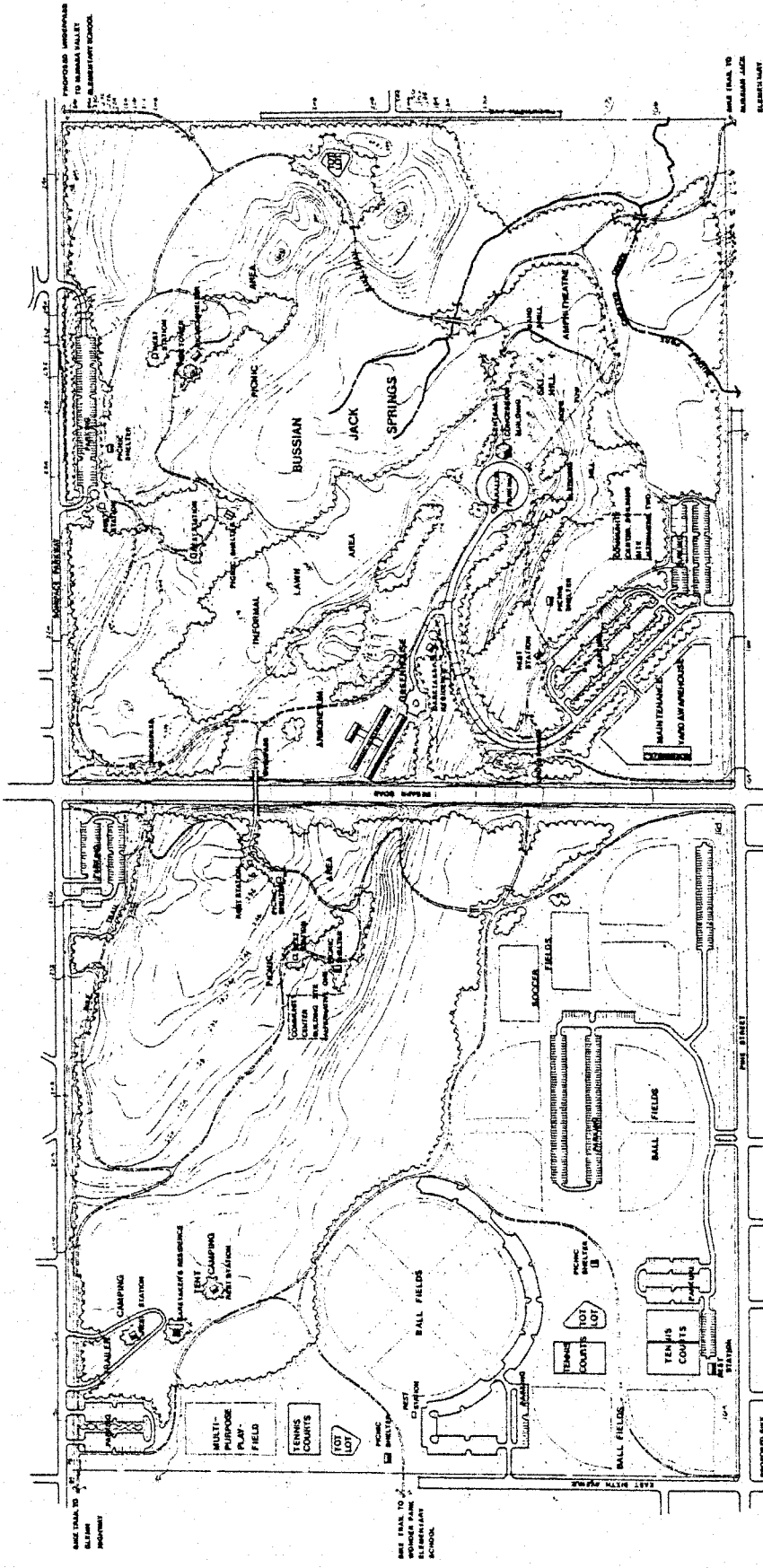
SUMMARY

Absence of consistent policies and appropriate planning have left their

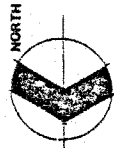
mark on the Russian Jack Springs Park Site. Changing public tastes, and political expediencies are inherent hazards in the administration of park land. While single purpose planning may be a reluctant chore required by a funding source, or initiated to advocate the scheme of a special interest group, development of the Russian Jack Springs Park Master Plan was motivated by a concern for both the organized and unrepresented recreational needs of urban Anchorage.

Planning was based on the perceived needs of the community, measured against physical site limitations and opportunities, to produce a long-range scenario for park facility development. To that end, it is recognized that this is a flexible document, and modifications will be necessary to achieve planning objectives.

The plan, though not addressed directly to a specific supporting agency, is nonetheless preoccupied with implementation. Construction of proposed facilities may be accomplished by passage of municipal or state bonds and/or appropriations, application and award of grants, and donations of money and/or materials and volunteer labor. Continued development is dependent on persistent public effort and support of Parks and Recreation by Anchorage residents.



# MASTER PLAN RUSSIAN JACK SPRINGS PARK



0 50 100 200 FEET



0 100 200 METERS



RUSSIAN JACK SPRINGS PARK	
PROJECT NO.	101-101
DATE	APRIL, 1973
SCALE	AS SHOWN
<b>MASTER PLAN</b> PREPARED BY THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS WASHINGTON, D.C.	