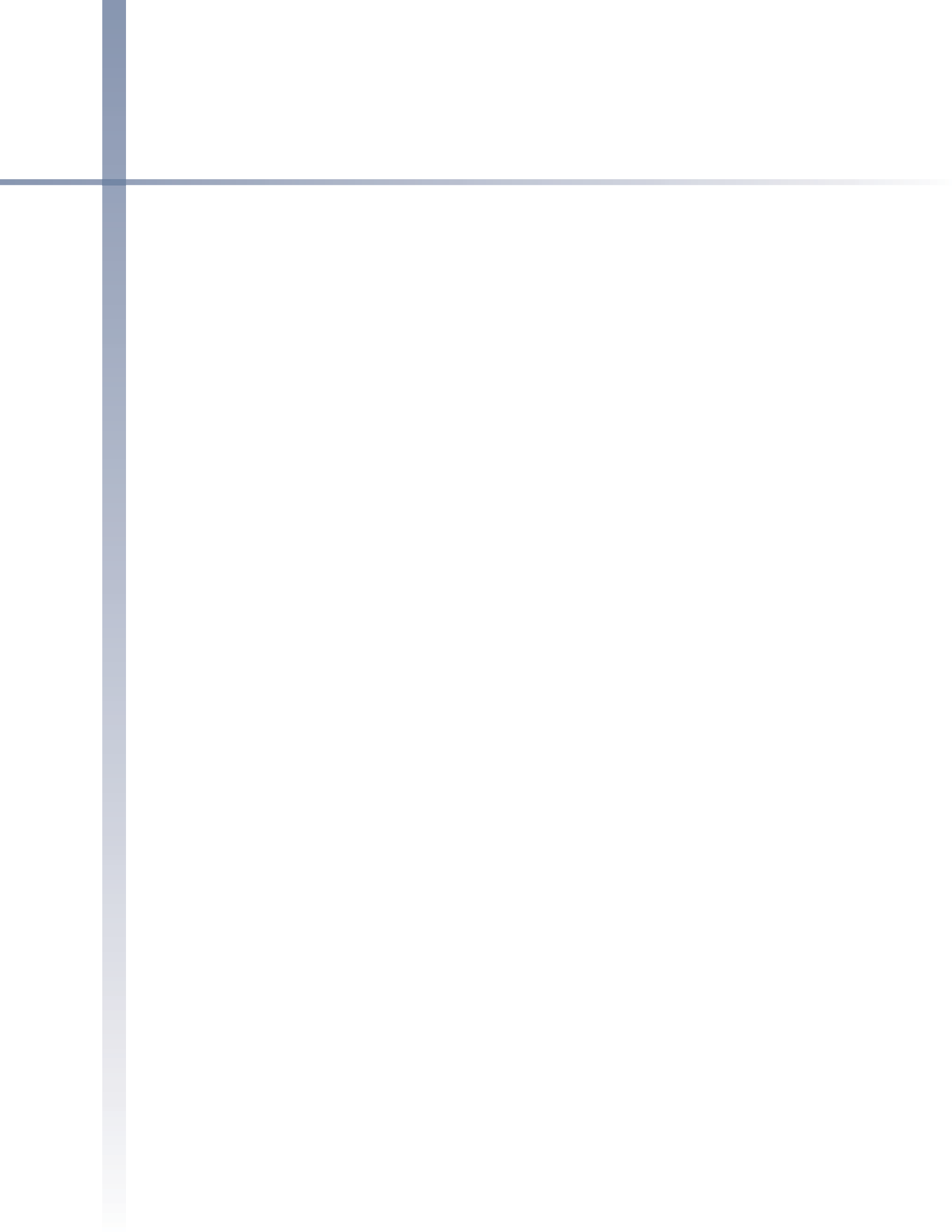


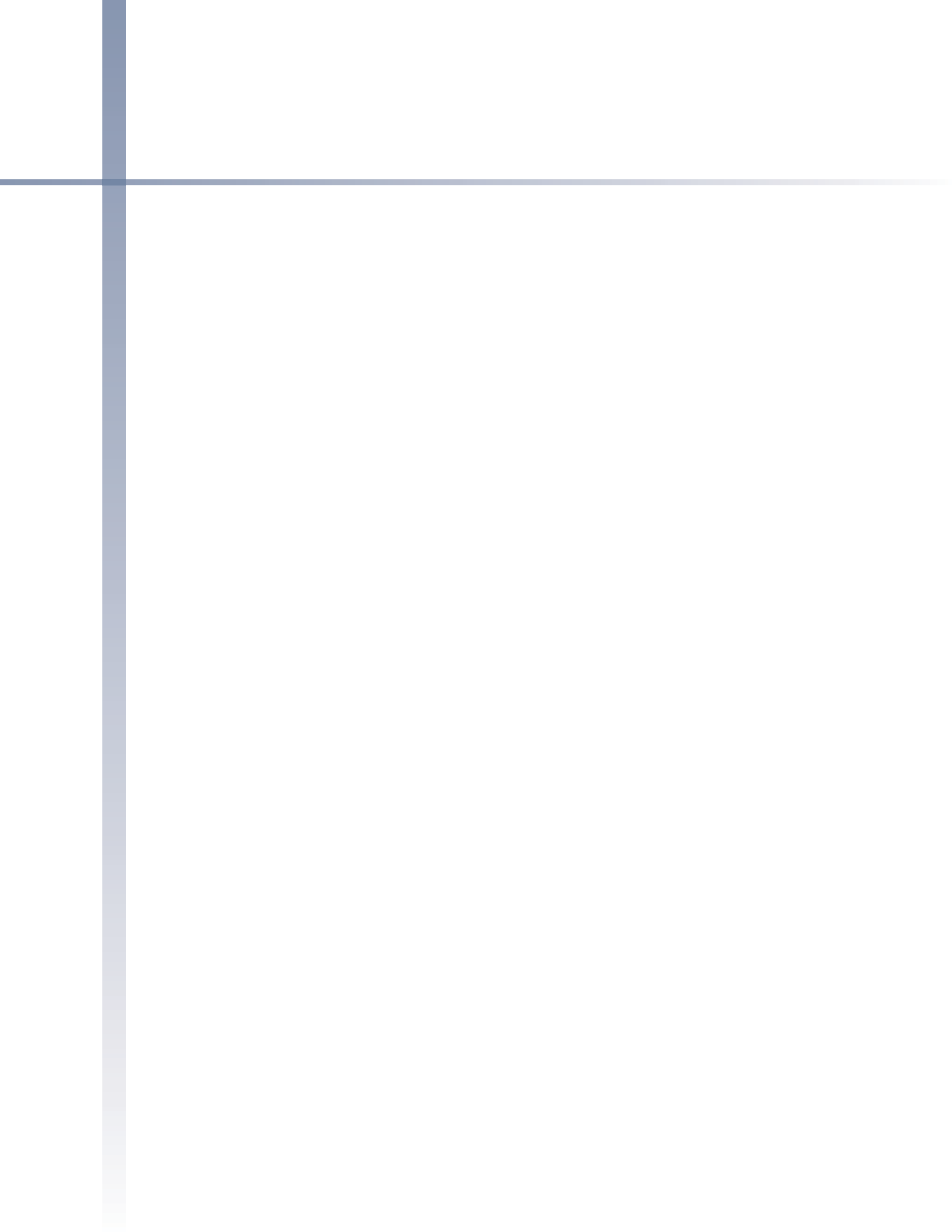
# Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<i>Introduction</i> .....	7
<i>Plan Purpose</i> .....	7
<i>Preferred Concept</i> .....	7
<b>Chapter 2: Planning Process</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<i>Planning Process</i> .....	11
<i>Citizens Advisory Committee</i> .....	11
<b>Chapter 3: Site Inventory</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<i>Location</i> .....	15
<i>Background and History</i> .....	15
<i>Regional Context</i> .....	20
<i>Climate</i> .....	20
<i>Geology</i> .....	20
<i>Soils</i> .....	22
<i>Hydrology</i> .....	23
<i>Vegetation</i> .....	25
<i>Wildlife</i> .....	26
<i>Cultural Resources</i> .....	27
<i>Scenic Resources</i> .....	27
<i>Access and Public Facilities</i> .....	28
<i>Area Land Ownership and Use</i> .....	29
<i>Relationship to the Municipality of Anchorage Park System</i> .....	32
<b>Chapter 4: Vision, Goals and Use Program</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<i>Defining the Vision and Goals</i> .....	41
<i>Vision</i> .....	41
<i>Goals</i> .....	41
<i>Use Program</i> .....	41
<i>Use Program Elements</i> .....	42
<b>Chapter 5: The Master Plan</b> .....	<b>45</b>
<i>Preliminary Concepts</i> .....	45
<i>Concept 1</i> .....	46
<i>Concept 2</i> .....	47
<i>Concept 3</i> .....	48
<b>Preferred Concept</b> .....	<b>51</b>
<i>Connections</i> .....	57
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	57
<b>Chapter 6: Funding Sources and Maintenance</b> .....	<b>61</b>
<i>Federal Funding</i> .....	61
<i>State Funding</i> .....	62
<i>Local Funding</i> .....	62
<i>Maintenance</i> .....	63
<i>Implementation and Phasing</i> .....	63
<b>References</b> .....	<b>65</b>



# List of Figures

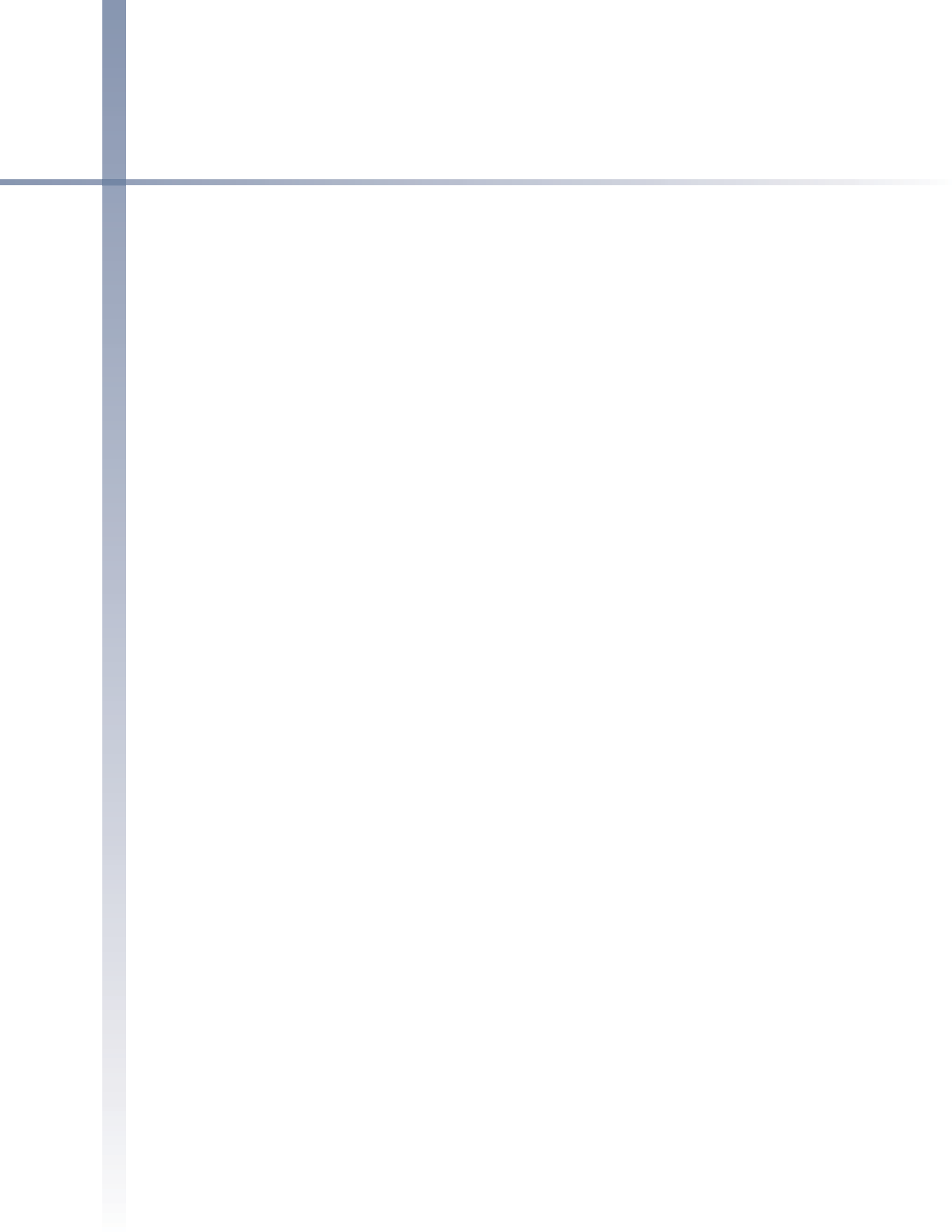
Figure 3-1: Location of Section 36.....	15
Figure 3-2: Section 36 Historic Time Line from 1960 through 2008.....	16
Figure 3-3: Section 36 Zoning.....	18
Figure 3-4: Section 36 Recorded Plat (Anchorage Recording District Plat No. 2008-100).....	19
Figure 3-5: Physical Features.....	20
Figure 3-6: Surficial Geology.....	21
Figure 3-7: Soils.....	22
Figure 3-8: The Hydrology of Section 36.....	24
Figure 3-9: Vegetation.....	25
Figure 3-10: Wildlife Corridors.....	26
Figure 3-11: 360 degree views from Section 36.....	28
Figure 3-12: Land Ownership.....	29
Figure 3-13: Hillside District Plan Land Use Map.....	30
Figure 3-14: Recreational Use of Section 36.....	31
Figure 3-15: Natural Resource Use Areas.....	34
Figure 3-16: Hillside District Plan Area Map.....	36
Figure 5-1: Section 36 Preliminary Concept #1 Illustrating Minimal Development.....	46
Figure 5-2: Section 36 Preliminary Concept #2 Illustrating Moderate Development.....	47
Figure 5-3: Section 36 Preliminary Concept #3 Illustrating Enhanced Development.....	48
Figure 5-4: Section 36 Preferred Concept.....	49
Figure 5-6: Trail Density Over One Square Mile.....	53
Figure 5-7: Section 36 Trail Cross Sections on a Moderate (7:1) Slope.....	54
Figure 5-8: Section 36 Trail Cross Sections on a Steep (3:1) Slope.....	55
Figure 5-9: Looking South into Section 36 from the Intersection of Upper De Armoun/Canyon Roads.....	56
Figure 5-10: Looking Northwest into Section 36 from Clark’s Road.....	56





chapter 1

# Introduction





## Introduction

Parks and open space are crucial for the health and well-being of society. They are places that reconnect people to nature through spontaneous play, social gatherings, and healthy activities. Located at the foothills of the Chugach Mountains in southeast Anchorage, Section 36 provides unique and valuable recreation opportunities for the community and the entire city of Anchorage. With the superb diversity of landscape from ridgeline to wetland and its proximity to Bear Valley Elementary School and Storck Park, Section 36 provides diverse areas for various forms of recreation and learning about nature. It also provides access to a variety of habitats, opportunities to see wildlife, and spectacular views of the Anchorage area.

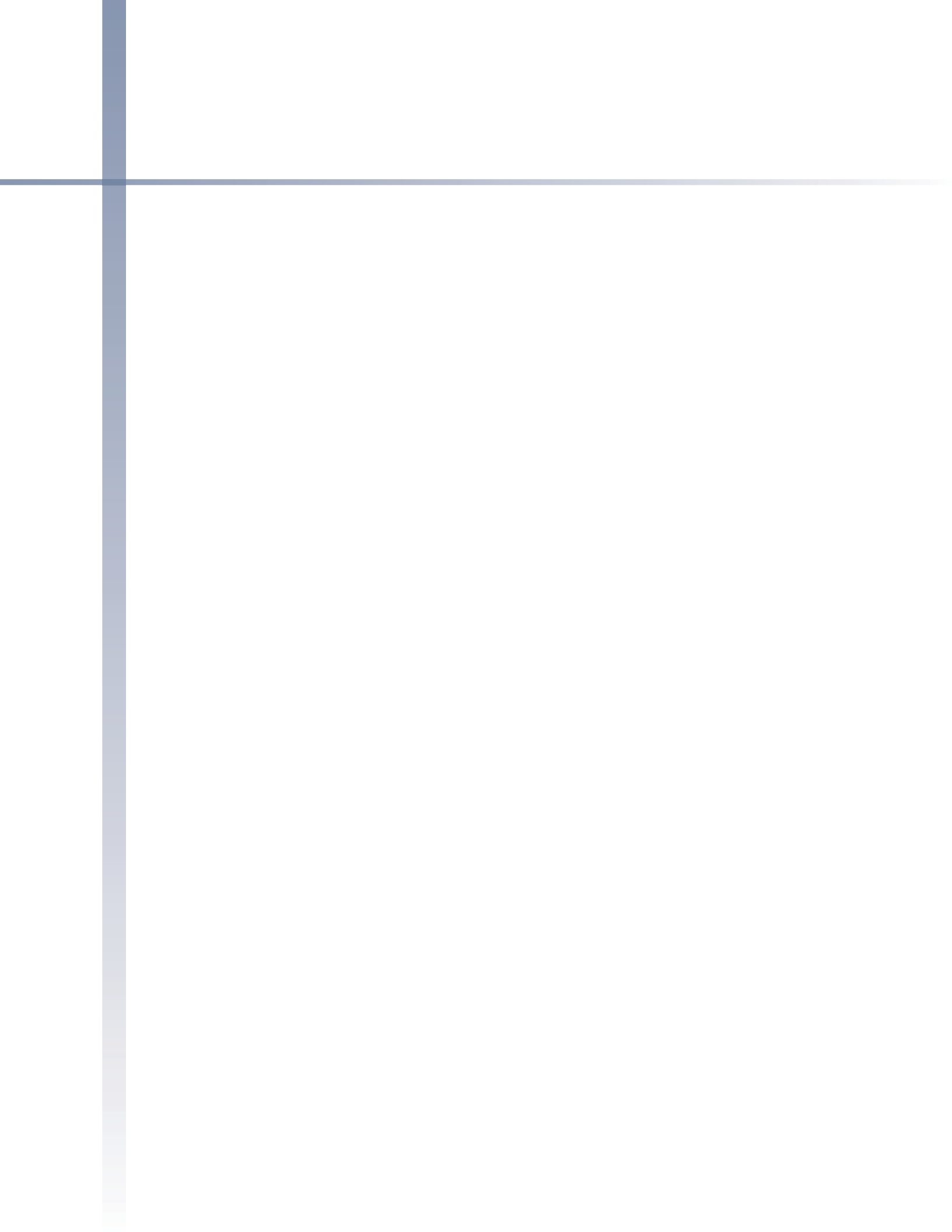
## Plan Purpose

The purpose of the Section 36 Master Plan is to guide the future development of Section 36 and determine suitable improvements based upon how this park fits into the network of existing parks and trails in the Anchorage area. The plan identifies the appropriate types and levels of recreational use compatible with the conservation of the natural resources of Section 36, an undeveloped square mile of land. Appropriate access and facility improvements consistent with the site characteristics and proposed uses are recommended and potential funding sources for park improvements and maintenance are evaluated.

This master plan is not a detailed design document, but a concept plan that provides guidance for future development of the park. This plan is expected to have a useful life of 10 to 15 years. After that time the actual use of the Section 36 should be evaluated and an update to the Section 36 Park Master Plan should be produced to determine a new vision.

## Preferred Concept

A preferred concept was determined through a planning process which included input from the public, a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), a public open house, a project website, newsletters, and email updates. The uses and facilities determined to be suitable for Section 36 will be relatively low impact and will provide for both active and passive recreation through multi-use trails designed to Class 2 and 3 parameters, ranging from low to medium density.



chapter 2

# Planning Process





## Planning Process

The planning process for the Section 36 Master Plan included the tasks outlined below:

### Public Involvement

Public involvement was an important component in the Section 36 master planning process. The CAC assisted in the development of the Section 36 Park Master Plan and included local residents as well as recreation specialists with a wide range of experience. Parks & Recreation also obtained public input through the community councils, from individuals via the project website, and a public meeting. The public was also able to testify before the Parks and Recreation Commission when the draft was presented.

The result of initial public input were three conceptual designs, which illustrated relatively low, medium, and high development. These figures were displayed at a public open house in early November in order to gather public input in developing a preferred alternative. There was a large turnout at the public meeting which included over 50 attendees representing differing points of view.

Through this process many people provided input. The public comments varied and ranged from users who desire low impact development without facilities to users who desire wide lighted ski trails and a chalet (Appendix E). Due to the diverse range of opinion, support was expressed for all three concepts.

### Site Inventory

The site inventory summarized information collected on the existing environment of Section 36. Base maps were prepared that compiled the information on site constraints and opportunities as well as recreation uses and needs.

### Visioning

The visioning process was used to explore the CAC's thoughts on the park character and level of development. The vision of what Section 36 could be in 10 to 20 years was explored and the steps needed to achieve this vision were listed as the goals.

### Program Development

Program development further refined the vision and goals. The program identified and evaluated the types and levels of activities appropriate for this area. They took into account recreational demand and the site's natural, cultural, and scenic characteristics. Information was gathered from existing documents, surveys, and CAC meetings.

### Site Concept Plans

Three alternative concept plans were developed based on the recommended program for the park. The concepts addressed access, parking, recreational/educational facilities, and connections to adjacent or nearby parks, trails, and greenbelts. The concepts acknowledged the area's natural and scenic resources in the siting of parking or other facilities and identified methods of accommodating appropriate types and levels of use. After public review of the three alternatives a preferred concept was developed.

### Preparation of the Master Plan

This Draft Section 36 Master Plan incorporates the information provided in the previous steps and presents a comprehensive summary of the planning process and final Master Plan Concept.

### Citizens Advisory Committee

The CAC was appointed through the Mayor's office and was one of many tools used to gather public input during the plan development process. The members of the CAC represented a wide cross-section of interests and included diverse segments of the community. The CAC was expected to represent both their personal views and those of the greater community. The CAC was designed to promote an understanding of a range of perspectives, facilitate an effective information channel, inform the planning team of community perspectives, and to augment the public process. Working with a small focused group of people allowed the planning team to engage in a more focused dialogue than what occurs at large public meetings. The CAC meetings were held monthly through much of 2009 and were concluded in early 2010.

An essential role of the CAC was to make recommendations on the type of use and level of

development for Section 36. The CAC gained background knowledge on Section 36 through meeting discussions, their own research and outreach, a group site walk, and presentations by special guests. Presenters included Rick Sinnott, wildlife biologist with Alaska Department of Fish & Game; Aimee Wedemeier, MOA Parks & Recreation on the “Get Outdoors Anchorage” program; Ian Moore of the Arctic Orienteering Club; Tom Harrison of Chugach State Park; and Claire Steffens, a Bear Valley resident who discussed the history and background of Section 36. The final consensus of the CAC recommended the type of use to be wild land recreation, which does not include the development of athletic fields. The level of development was proposed to be low impact recreational use with the preservation of natural open spaces. Discussions included the value of Section 36 in being a place between an urban park (Storck Park) and the wilderness of Chugach State Park creating an opportunity for those who may not have the abilities or knowledge to experience more remote wilderness. Section 36 could also be appropriate for outdoor education particularly for Bear Valley Elementary School. There was also discussion regarding facilities and the role they play in recreation. The result of these discussions was the Vision, Goals, and Program Elements which guided the development of the three concepts.

The CAC’s diverse backgrounds and connections in the recreational community has given them exposure to the different needs and desires. The CAC was an important part of the planning process and though the

CAC was not a decision-making body, their perspectives informed the planning process. Project decisions will ultimately be made by MOA Parks and Recreation Department through this planning process.

The Section 36 CAC members are listed below:

*Susanne Comellas*  
*Rabbit Creek Community Council*

*Laurie Holland*  
*Bear Valley Community Council*

*Louise Hooyer*  
*Heritage Land Bank Advisory Commission*

*Jerry Lewanski (chair)*  
*Former Chugach State Park Superintendent*

*Julian Mason*  
*Chugach State Park Advisory Committee*

*David McGivern*  
*Alaska Pacific University Outdoor Studies*

*David Mitchell*  
*Great Land Trust*

*Victor Mollozzi (vice chair)*  
*Parks & Recreation Commission*



*Section 36 Citizens Advisory Committee Site Walk*



chapter 3

# Site Inventory



## Location

Section 36 is approximately 640 acres of primarily undeveloped land located in the Bear Valley area of southeast Anchorage. Road rights-of-way encompass approximately 14 acres, and Alascom Inc. owns a 2.5 acre in-holding developed as a communications facility. The legal description is: Section 36, Township 12 North, Range 3 West, Seward Meridian, Anchorage, Alaska (Figure 3-1).



Figure 3-1: Location of Section 36

## Background and History

Section 36 has a controversial history due to issues associated with ownership, development, and use. Two and a half acres of Section 36 are a radio relay in-holding and 14 acres consist of road rights-of-way for Clark’s Road, Heights Hill Road, and a small section of Rabbit Creek Road in the northwest corner. Section 36, less the in-holding and road rights-of-way, was under state control until 1989 when land ownership was granted to the MOA.

The 2.5-acre in-holding was originally managed and operated as the Rabbit Creek Radio Relay Site by the Army from the 1960s to 1980s. The initial acquisition of the in-holding was through Public Land Order 2993 issued by the Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM) on March 22, 1963. Through this order, lands could be withdrawn for use by the Departments of Army and Air Force. On November 8, 1983 the Department of Defense sold the Rabbit Creek Radio Relay Site to Alascom, Incorporated. This site is currently an Alascom in-holding within Section 36 zoned as AF (Antenna Farm). Three additional antenna towers on HLB land are operated by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (Figure 3-2).

In 1979, the MOA applied to acquire 623.5 acres of Section 36 that was under state control, through the Municipal Land Entitlement Program of 1978. This program was designed to facilitate the transfer of land from the state to boroughs and unified municipalities. The land was transferred from the State Department of Natural Resources to the MOA over several years, with the final transfer occurring in 1989.

The Heritage Land Bank (HLB) was created by the MOA to manage the lands acquired from the State that were not assigned to other agencies for specific uses. In 1984 and 1988, the HLB prepared land inventories to evaluate the appropriate disposition of HLB lands. Both inventories included recommendations that a master plan be prepared for Section 36 to determine the most appropriate land use and development pattern. The potential uses identified in these inventories included residential development, open space, greenbelts, and trails.

Controversy over the use, zoning, and platting of Section 36 arose in the 1980s. The public requested the entire section of land to be maintained as park land; though in 1991, the HLB Section 36 Land Use Study called for a mix of residential and park land development. The 1991 study evaluated the development suitability

**1959**  
U.S. Army acquired the 2.5-acre Rabbit Creek Radio Relay site.



**11-08-83**  
The Department of Defense sold the 2.5 acre Rabbit Creek Radio Relay Site to Alascom.

1960

1970

1980

**1963**  
Mandatory Borough Act allows municipalities to acquire certain state lands.

**3-22-63**  
BLM Public Land Order 2993 withdrew lands for military use (including the Rabbit Creek Radio Relay Site)

**1978**  
The Municipal Land Entitlement Program of 1978 (MLEP) transferred land from the state to boroughs and unified municipalities.

**1984**  
MOA HLB acquired Section 36 for use or disposal to be determined after the development of a master plan. Section 36 was recommended for disposal without the development of a master plan.

**2-15-84**  
PLO 2993, Deed BK 1048 Granted from the USA to Alascom Inc. Easement Deed for the Antennae Farm and Deed of Land for the Antennae Farm Roadway.

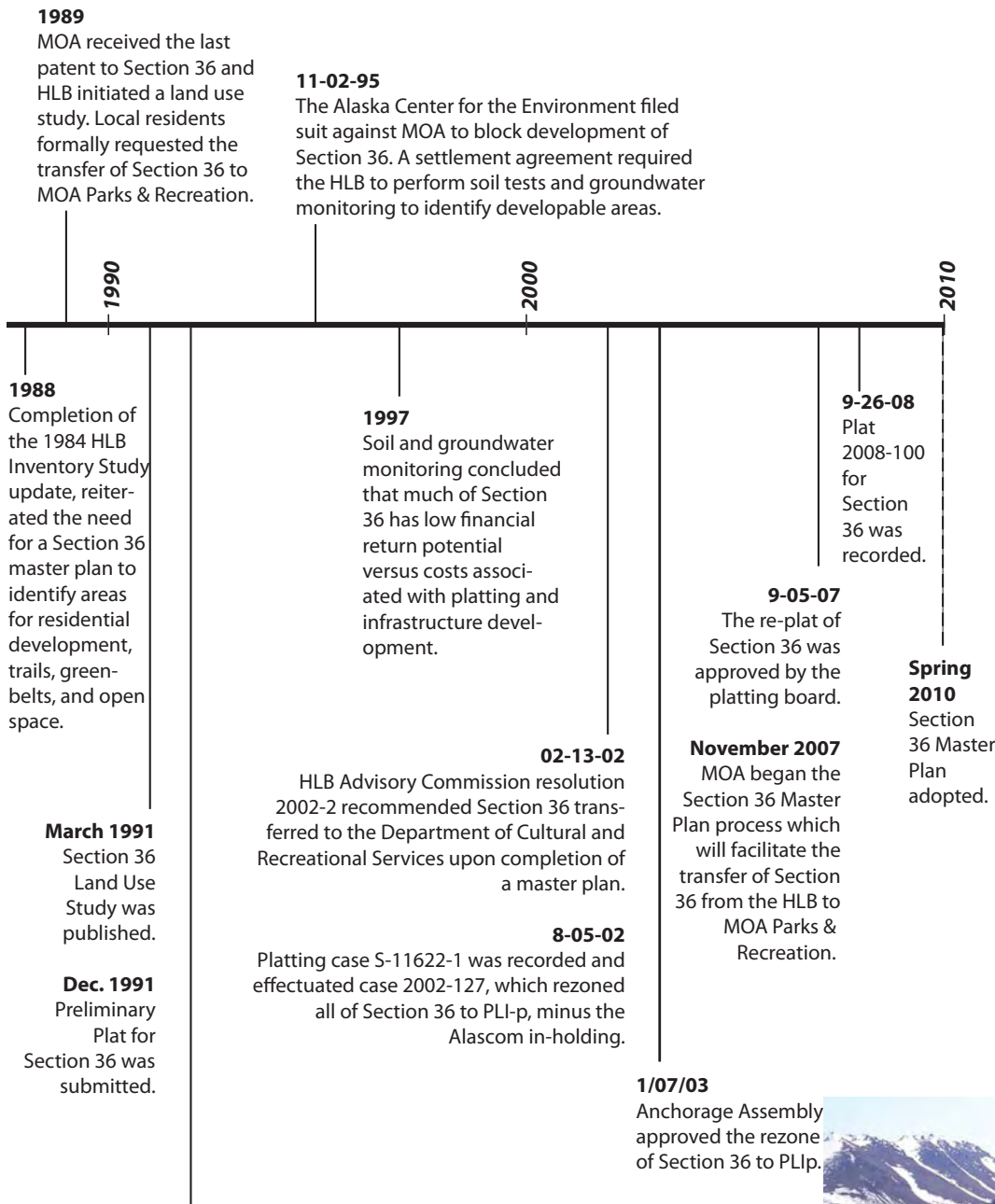
**1979**  
MOA applied for Section 36 parcels under MLEP.

**1986**  
Residents requested Section 36 be transferred to MOA Parks and Recreation Commission. MOA did not have patent to Section 36 parcels so the HLB could not transfer the land.

**1987**  
Initial HLB Five Year Management Plan called for the development of a Section 36 land use plan.



Figure 3-2: Section 36 Historic Time Line from 1960 through 2008



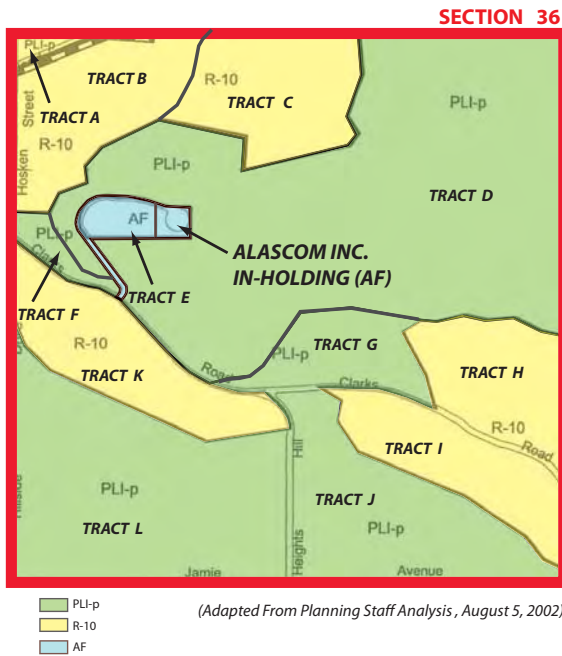
of the area and recommended that 200 acres be designated for residential development and the remainder (less the existing Alascom Inc. in-holding and antennas) be designated for open space (Figure 3-3). The implementation plan called for soil testing and groundwater monitoring to confirm the development suitability of the residential areas, platting the area into open space and residential areas, rezoning the areas appropriately. The MOA adopted the Land Use Study in 1992 and approved a rezone of the area.

In 1995, the Alaska Center for the Environment filed suit to stop the subdivision of the property. On November 2, 1995, the MOA and the Alaska Center for the Environment entered into a settlement agreement to conduct the studies required to determine the development suitability of Section 36. Soil tests were completed in 1997 and concluded that much of the property was not suitable for development and

that development costs would be too high to justify residential development. In 2002, the HLB passed a resolution recommending that management of Section 36 be transferred to the MOA Parks and Recreation Department and the entire section, except the in-holding, be rezoned to Public Lands and Institutions. On January 7, 2003 the Anchorage Assembly approved the rezone of Section 36 to PLIp. On September 5, 2007, the Platting Board approved the Section 36 re-plat for Tracts 1-5, T12N, R3W to PLIp (Figure 3-4).

Other than the antenna towers and the road rights-of-way, Section 36 has remained undeveloped and has become a popular recreation area primarily for neighborhood residents. Section 36 is currently managed by the HLB and will be transferred to MOA's Parks and Recreation Department management upon the completion of this master plan.

Early plat of Section 36 with both residential and open space development (PLI-p)



Recent plat of Section 36 with PLI-p Zoning

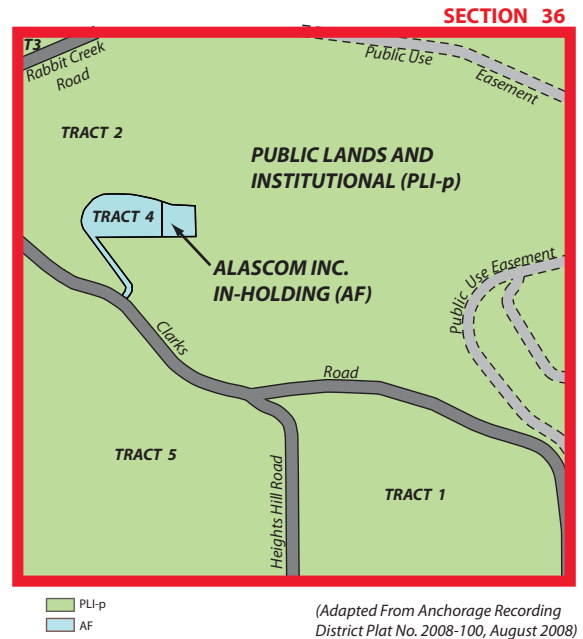
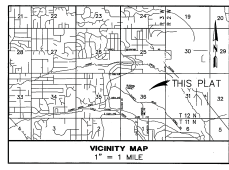
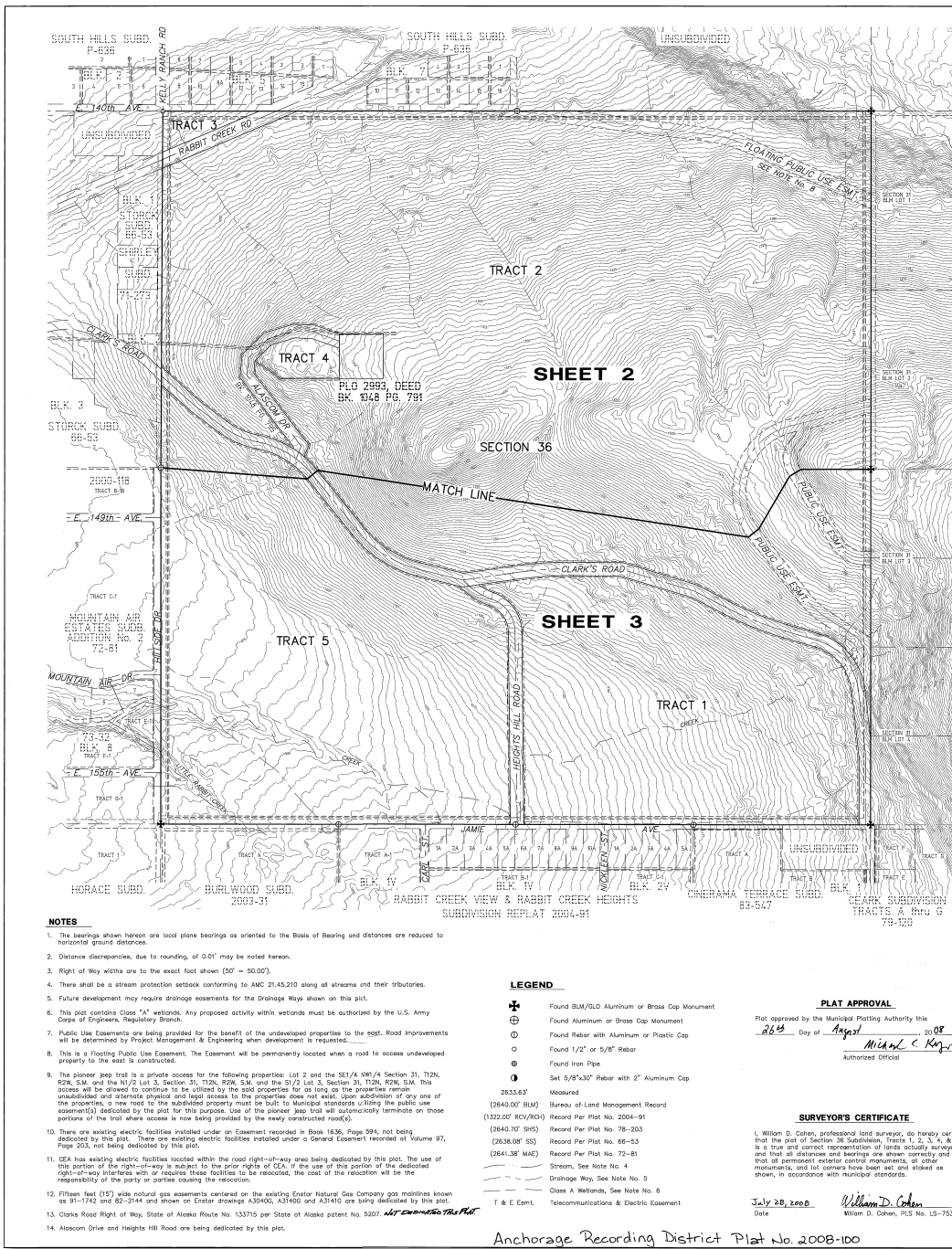


Figure 3-3: Section 36 Zoning



**CERTIFICATE OF OWNERSHIP AND DEDICATION**

I (We), hereby certify that I (We) hold the herein specified property interest in the property described hereon. I (We) hereby dedicate to the Municipality of Anchorage all areas depicted for use as public utility easements, streets, alleys, thoroughfares, parks, and other public areas shown hereon. There shall be reserved adjacent to the dedicated streets shown hereon a slope protection easement, sufficient to carry a cut and fill height of 15 feet (notional) for each foot vertical (1.5 to 1) of cut or fill for the purpose of grading and maintaining the lateral support of the constructed streets. There is reserved to the grantors, their heirs, successors and assigns, the right to use such areas at any time upon providing and maintaining other adequate lateral support, as approved by the Municipality.

I (We) hereby agree to this plat and to any restriction or covenant appearing hereon and any such restriction or covenant shall be binding and enforceable against present and successive owners of this subdivided property.

*Michael K. Adams*  
 Municipality of Anchorage, Heritage Land Bldg.  
 630 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 640  
 Anchorage, AK 99501-6650

**NOTARY'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Personally appeared: MICHAEL K. ADAMS  
 Subscribed and sworn to before me this 28 day of SEPTEMBER, 2008  
*John Reed* 5/16/2010  
 Notary for Alaska My Commission Expires

By: **BENEFICIARY**

**NOTARY'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Personally appeared \_\_\_\_\_  
 Subscribed and sworn to before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_  
 Notary for Alaska My Commission Expires \_\_\_\_\_

**ACCEPTANCE OF DEDICATION BY THE MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE**

The Municipality of Anchorage hereby accepts for public use and for public purposes the real property depicted on this plat including but not limited to, the easements and rights-of-way, alleys, thoroughfares, and parks shown hereon. Dated at Anchorage, Alaska this 28th day of August, 2008.

Attest:  
*Rebecca S. Mack* Mayor  
 Clerk

**TAX CERTIFICATION**

All real property taxes levied by the Municipality of Anchorage on the area shown on this plat have been paid in full, and if approved is sought between January 1st and the tax due date, there is on deposit with the Civil Finance Office an amount sufficient to pay estimated real property tax for the current year.

8-28-08 *Janet Higgins*  
 Date Authorized Official

Approvals: *JWR* 9-22-08  
 Planning officer  
 Municipal manager *Thomas W. Sapp* 9/24/08  
 On Site Water and Waste Water

RECORDED - FILED  
 ANCHORAGE REC. DIST.  
 DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 TIME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Recorder by: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**SCALE**  
 1" = 200 FT.

**PLAT OF SECTION 36 SUBDIVISION TRACTS 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5**

A SUBDIVISION OF SECTION 36, T12N, R29W, S34M, EXCEPTING PLO 0993 AND CLARK'S ROAD, RIGHT OF WAY FOR STATE OF ALASKA PATENTS 5207 AND 10138

SECTION 36, TOWNSHIP 12 NORTH, RANGE 3 WEST, SEWARD MERIDIAN, ANCHORAGE RECORDING DISTRICT, ALASKA CONTAINING 641.064 ACRES

**ASTS LLC**  
 300 W. 3rd AVENUE  
 ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99503  
 PHONE (907) 338-8500  
 FAX (907) 338-5337

DATE: 7/29/08 SCALE: 1" = 300'  
 DRAWN: BR/CM/NOG SHEET: 1 of 3  
 CHECKED: WDC P.L.D. BK. 3364 DATE: 5/26/08  
 ANCHORAGE REC. DIST. 5-11822-1

**PLAT APPROVAL**

Plat approved by the Municipal Planning Authority this 28th day of August, 2008  
*Michael C. King*  
 Authorized Official



**SURVEYOR'S CERTIFICATE**

I, William D. Cohen, professional land surveyor, do hereby certify that the plat of Section 36 Subdivision, Tracts 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5 is a true and correct representation of lands actually surveyed and that all distances and bearings are shown correctly and that all permanent exterior control monuments of other monuments, and all corners have been set and staked in situ, in accordance with Municipal standards.

July 28, 2008 *William D. Cohen*  
 Date

- NOTES**
- The bearings shown hereon are load plane bearings as oriented to the Basis of Bearing and distances are reduced to horizontal ground distances.
  - Distance discrepancies, due to rounding, of 0.01' may be noted hereon.
  - Right of Way widths are to the exact foot shown (50' = 50.00').
  - There shall be a stream protection setback conforming to AMC 21.45.210 along all streams and their tributaries.
  - Future development may require drainage easements for the Drainage Ways shown on this plat.
  - This plat contains Class "A" wetlands. Any proposed activity within wetlands must be authorized by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Regulatory Branch.
  - Public Use Easements are being provided for the benefit of the undeveloped properties to the east. Road improvements will be determined by Project Management & Engineering when development is requested.
  - This is a Floating Public Use Easement. The Easement will be permanently located when a road to access undeveloped property to the east is constructed.
  - The pioneer jeep trail is a private access for the following properties: Lot 2 and the SE1/4 4th/4 Section 31, T12N, R29W, S34M and the NW1/2 Lot 3, Section 31, T12N, R29W, S34M, and the SW1/2 Lot 3, Section 31, T12N, R29W, S34M. This access will be allowed to continue to be utilized by the said properties for as long as the properties remain unadvised and alternate physical and legal access to the properties does not exist. Upon subdivision of any one of the properties, a new road to the subdivided property must be built to Municipal standards using the public use easement(s) dedicated by the plot for this purpose. Use of the pioneer jeep trail will automatically terminate on those portions of the trail where access is now being provided by the newly constructed road(s).
  - There are existing electric facilities installed under an Easement recorded in Book 1636, Page 594, not being dedicated by this plat. There are existing electric facilities installed under a General Easement recorded at Volume 97, Page 203, not being dedicated by this plat.
  - CEA has existing electric facilities located within the road right-of-way area being dedicated by this plat. The use of this portion of the right-of-way is subject to the prior rights of CEA. If the use of the portion of the dedicated right-of-way interferes with or requires these facilities to be relocated, the cost of the relocation will be the responsibility of the party or parties causing the relocation.
  - Fifteen feet (15') wide natural gas easements centered on the existing Entor Natural Gas Company gas pipelines shown as 81-1742 and 82-2144 and shown on Entor drawings A30400, A31400 and A31410 are being dedicated by this plat.
  - Clark Road Right of Way, State of Alaska Route No. 133715 per State of Alaska patent No. 5207, not being dedicated by this plat.
  - Alscorn Drive and Heights Hill Road are being dedicated by this plat.

- LEGEND**
- Found BLM/BLD Aluminum or Brass Cap Monument
  - Found Aluminum or Brass Cap Monument
  - Found Rebar with Aluminum or Plastic Cap
  - Found 1/2" or 5/8" Rebar
  - Found Iron Pipe
  - Set 5/8"x30" Rebar with 2" Aluminum Cap
  - Measured
  - Bureau of Land Management Record (2845.00' BLM)
  - Record Per Plat No. 2004-91 (2840.00' SHS)
  - Record Per Plat No. 78-203 (2838.00' SS)
  - Record Per Plat No. 77-81
  - Stream, See Note No. 4
  - Drainage Way, See Note No. 5
  - Class A Wetlands, See Note No. 6
  - Telecommunications & Electric Easement

Anchorage Recording District Plat No. 2008-100

Figure 3-4: Section 36 Recorded Plat (Anchorage Recording District Plat No. 2008-100)



*Looking south to the ridge line of Section 36.*

### Regional Context

Section 36 is part of the Southeast Park District of Anchorage. The 2009 population estimate of the Anchorage Borough is 286,283. The population of the Anchorage Bowl is approximately 220,000 with a population increase of 80,000 expected by 2020 (SGLI, 2008). Most of that growth is expected to occur primarily in southeast Anchorage due to its relatively high percentage of undeveloped land. The rezoning of Section 36 as park land allows for a large area of land to remain undeveloped while surrounding development continues to expand, providing unique and valuable opportunities for outdoor recreation and education. Maintaining undeveloped areas allows natural systems to function, and can mitigate the effects of development, which can be especially problematic in this steep area. This large undeveloped block of land with a diversity of habitat is important in maintaining habitat and wildlife connectivity on the Hillside. Also, as population and development are increasing in southeast Anchorage, access to Chugach State Park is decreasing. Section 36 has the potential to play a role in connecting the south end of the Anchorage Bowl to Chugach State Park and other greenbelts, where informal connections are disappearing with development (MOA, 1991).

### Climate

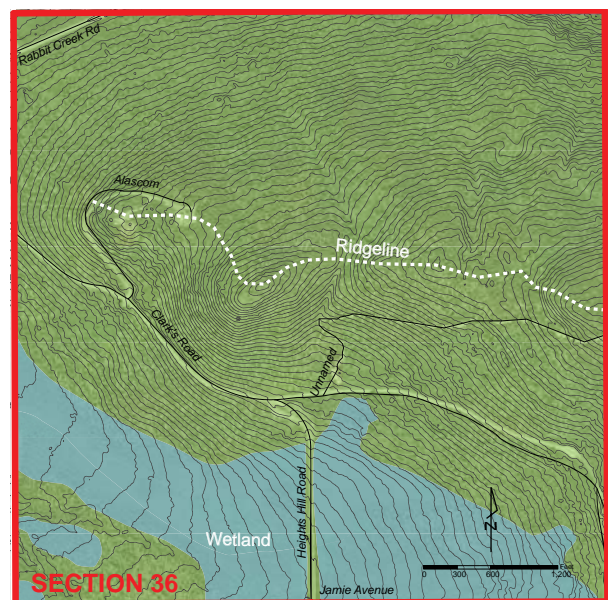
The climate in the Anchorage area is moderated by the waters of Cook Inlet. Summers are cool and winters are relatively mild. The average temperatures in January range from 8 to 21 degrees Fahrenheit. In July, average temperatures range from 51 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Annual precipitation is 15.9 inches, and annual snowfall is 69 inches (Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, 2008). The

location of Section 36, high on the Anchorage Hillside, results in a longer winter period than areas lower in the Anchorage Bowl. In addition, the area is subject to high winds from September through April. Winds over 50 miles per hour occur an average of six times per year, and gusts on the Hillside have been measured at over 90 miles per hour (MOA, 1991).

### Physical Features

Section 36 is dominated by a low mountain ridge with low-lying wetlands south of the ridge. The forested ridgeline contains four knolls that run east-west at approximately the middle of the section forming a north-facing slope down to Rabbit Creek, a west-facing slope down toward a small subdivision and Ray E. Storck Homestead Park (Storck Park), and a south-facing slope down to the wetlands area and Little Rabbit Creek (Figure 3-5).

The topographic elevations within Section 36 range from 950 feet to 1,630 feet. The steepness of the slopes range from virtually flat (0 to 5 percent slope) in the low-lying wet areas to very steep (25 to 40 percent) in other areas (MOA, 1991).



*Figure 3-5: Physical Features*

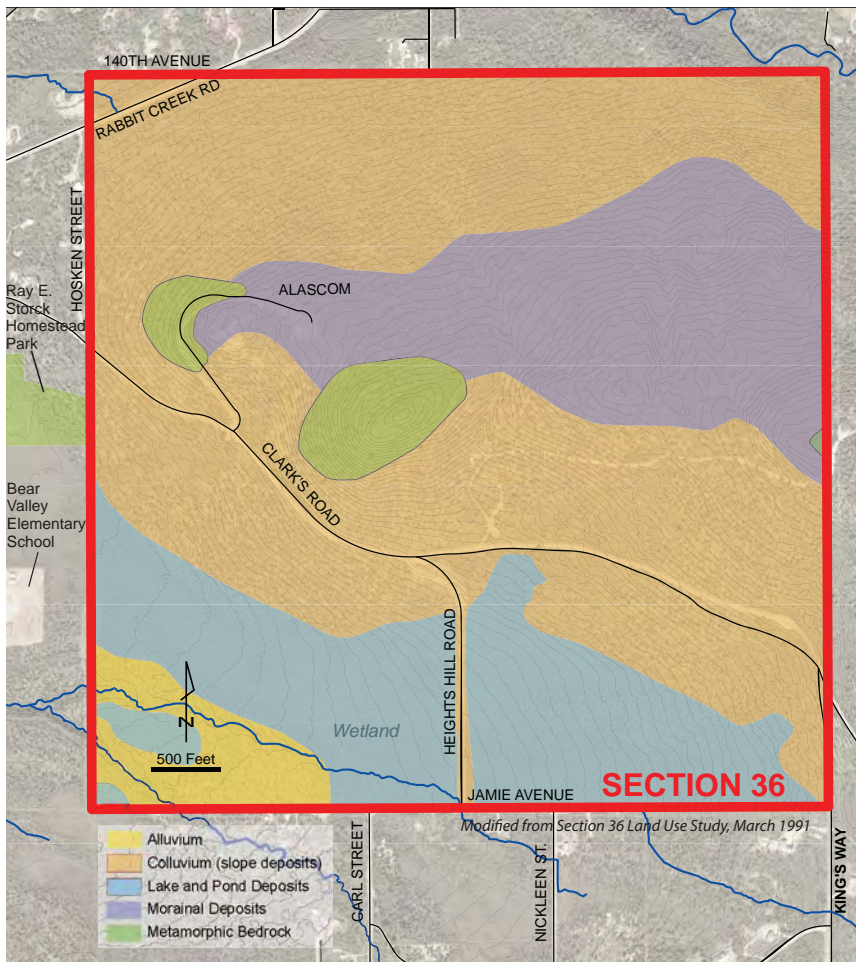


Figure 3-6: Surficial Geology

## Geology

The land forms of the Anchorage area are dominated by surficial deposits of unconsolidated materials originally deposited by glacial and glaciofluvial processes during the Quaternary period (Grey, 1982). The land formations of Section 36 were deposited by Wisconsin glaciation approximately 20,000 years ago. The surficial material along the ridge and in the extreme northeast corner consists of morainal deposits, an accumulation of earth and stones deposited by glaciation. Colluvium, fragments of sand and gravel, intermixed with bedrock, solid rock exposed to the surface, can be found as deposits along the slopes. The bedrock is metamorphic rock with outcrops occurring in three places that total approximately 14 acres (Figure 3-6). The vertical thickness of unconsolidated sediments overlying the

bedrock increases when descending from the higher to lower slope areas and ranges from 0 to 50 feet.

The wetland areas are typically underlain by lake and pond deposits, consisting of silt and clay that accumulated in formerly ice-dammed lakes. These types of soils are not permeable and prevent the water from filtering down into groundwater aquifers.

Alluvium occurs in the area around the confluence of the two forks of Little Rabbit Creek and in a small area near the northwest corner of Section 36 (MOA, 1991).



Rock Outcrop in Section 36

## Soils

A limited soils survey was conducted in February 1990 by Harding Lawson Associates (MOA, 1991) (Figure 3-7). At the time, residential development was being considered and the purpose of the geotechnical investigation was to determine any prohibitive subsurface conditions. The focus of the study was primarily the depth of the soil over bedrock, depth to existing water table and determination of fundamental soil classification. Percolation rates, long-term groundwater monitoring and site specific analysis of soil characteristics were not addressed in the investigation. The conclusion of the geotechnical analysis determined the subsurface conditions of Section 36 to be consistent with other residential developments in the general area (Krueger, 1990). Though residential development is no longer

being considered for Section 36, the geotechnical information can be valuable when evaluating recreational improvements.

The majority of the soils found in Section 36 are Homestead silt loam which can be found in other areas of the Upper Hillside (Table 3-1). The Doroshin peat and Grewingk sandy loam are wet, poorly drained soils associated with the wetland and riparian areas (MOA, 1991).

Soil classifications found in Section 36 in their order of prevalence are Homestead silt loam, Purches silt loam, Caswell, Grewingk, Torpedo Lake silt loam, and Doroshin peat.



Exposed Soils in Section 36

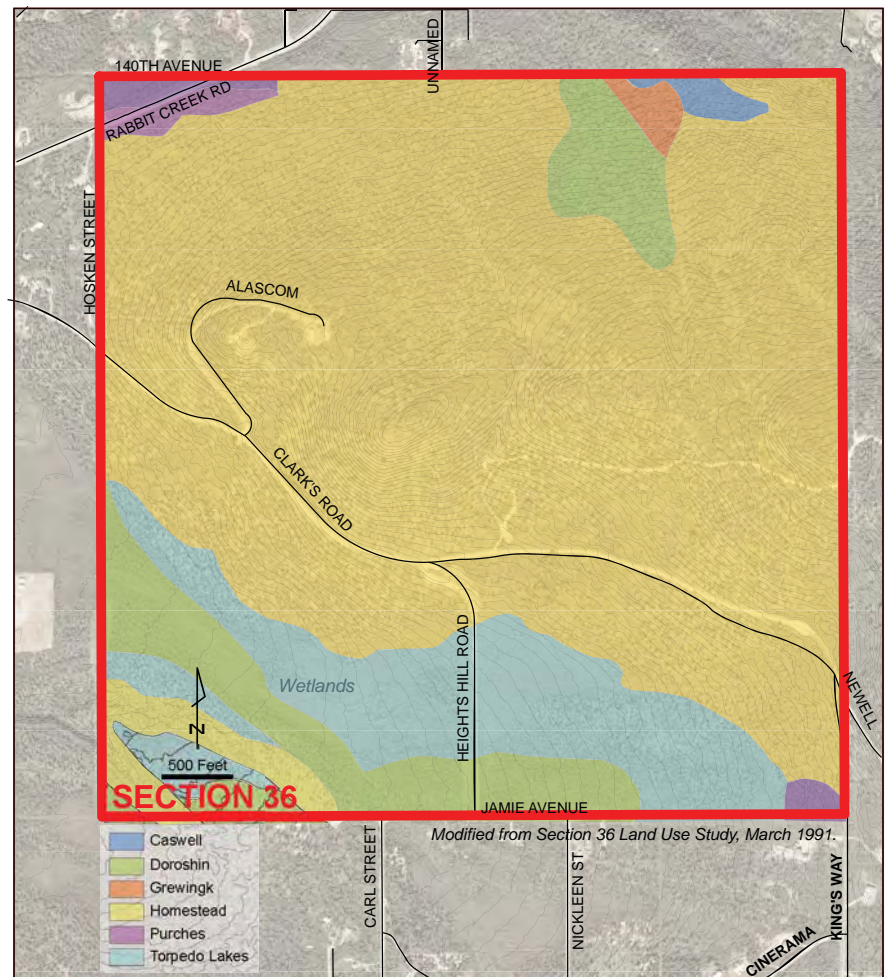


Figure 3-7: Soils

Homestead silt loam is a well-drained soil formed by wind deposits of glacial till and colluvium. It occurs on nearly level to steep side slopes. Runoff is moderate on slopes to 20 percent. Slopes from 20 to 40 percent and above have very rapid runoff rates and represent severe erosion hazard if disturbed. Homestead silt loam is found throughout most of Section 36, except for the low-lying wet areas. As an indication of these soils, vegetation varies from mixed stands of white spruce-birch to tall shrub alder.

Doroshin peat is a very poorly drained soil formed in moderately deep deposits of decomposing peat over a mineral substratum. An indication of these soils is vegetation consisting of stunted stands of closed black spruce with an understory dominated by tall shrub and sphagnum mosses in the wetland areas. Doroshin peat occurs next to the Torpedo Lake soils in the wetland areas of Section 36. It is found by itself in the north central portion of Section 36 on a 15 to 25 percent slope.

Grenwingk sandy loam is a somewhat poorly drained soil occurring on the north-facing slope of a moraine in one area of Section 36. The water table is within three feet of the surface. Surface runoff is rapid, and the erosion hazard is severe.

Torpedo Lake silt is poorly to moderately well-drained soil occurring on muskeg borders and slight depressions on glacial till uplands and ground moraines. It is found only in the wetland areas of Section 36. The water table typically ranges from two to six feet.

Purches silt loam is a poorly to moderately well-drained soil occurring on muskeg borders and slight depressions on glacial till uplands and ground moraines. It is found only in the northwest corner of Section 36. An indication of these soils is vegetation consisting of mixed stands of birch and white spruce.

Caswell soil is a moderately well-drained soil which occurs on low terraces. It is formed in silty and sandy waterlaid sediments over very gravelly sand. It occurs only in one small area in the northeast corner of Section 36 (MOA, 1991).

	<i>Picnic Areas</i>	<i>Trails</i>	<i>Access Roads</i>	<i>Parking Lots</i>	<i>Picnic Areas</i>
<i>Doroshin</i>	Severe	Severe	Severe	Severe	Severe
<i>Homestead</i>	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Slight
<i>Purches</i>	Moderate	Moderate	Severe	Severe	Slight
<i>Torpedo Lake</i>	Severe	Severe	Severe	Severe	Severe
<i>Caswell</i>	Moderate	Moderate	Severe	Severe	Moderate
<i>Grenwingk</i>	Severe	Moderate	Severe	Severe	Severe

*Table 3-1: Soil Constraints for Recreational Development*

### Hydrology

Section 36 is part of the Hillside District that has a unique combination of characteristics that affect drainage. It receives higher rainfall and snow than the Anchorage Bowl and has some of the steepest slopes. It also contains a complex arrangement of landforms and soils resulting in some areas that drain quickly and others with high water tables (MOA, 2007).

The dominating east-west trending ridge is flanked by Rabbit Creek to the north (just outside Section 36) and Little Rabbit Creek to the south (Figure 3-8). The



*Wetlands in Section 36*

headwaters for both Little Rabbit Creek and Rabbit Creek are at high altitudes in the bedrock terrain within Chugach State Park. All drainage ways and streams crossing Section 36 discharge either directly to one of these two streams or to a small tributary to Rabbit Creek west of Storck Park. All stream features and springs are concentrated in a narrow band along the south border and far southwest corner of the section. Throughout the remainder of Section 36, major watercourse features occur as natural channels or roadway ditches. Deep narrow ravines cut the slopes of the central ridge, flaring to shallower swales at the base and then discharging across small, steep, vegetated fans (MOA, 2008).

Wetlands and discharge zones form a band around the central mountain ridge. The wetlands area encompasses nearly 25 percent of Section 36 (MOA,

2000) and the Anchorage Wetlands Management Plan designates it as Class A preservation wetlands. At numerous locations, the discharge zones cut by roads are capturing and significantly redirecting some of the shallow groundwater surfacing in these areas (MOA, 2008).

This system as a whole--the densely vegetated bottoms of the large ravines draining to clusters of broad swales and then into small streams and wetland complexes near the base of the steep mountain slopes--attenuates peak runoff by detaining upslope runoff. Maintenance of these systems yields substantial drainage control benefits. Their disturbance would create long-term erosion, icing, drainage issues, and road system maintenance problems. Once these systems are disturbed, they can be very costly and difficult to repair (MOA, 2008).



Wetlands in Section 36

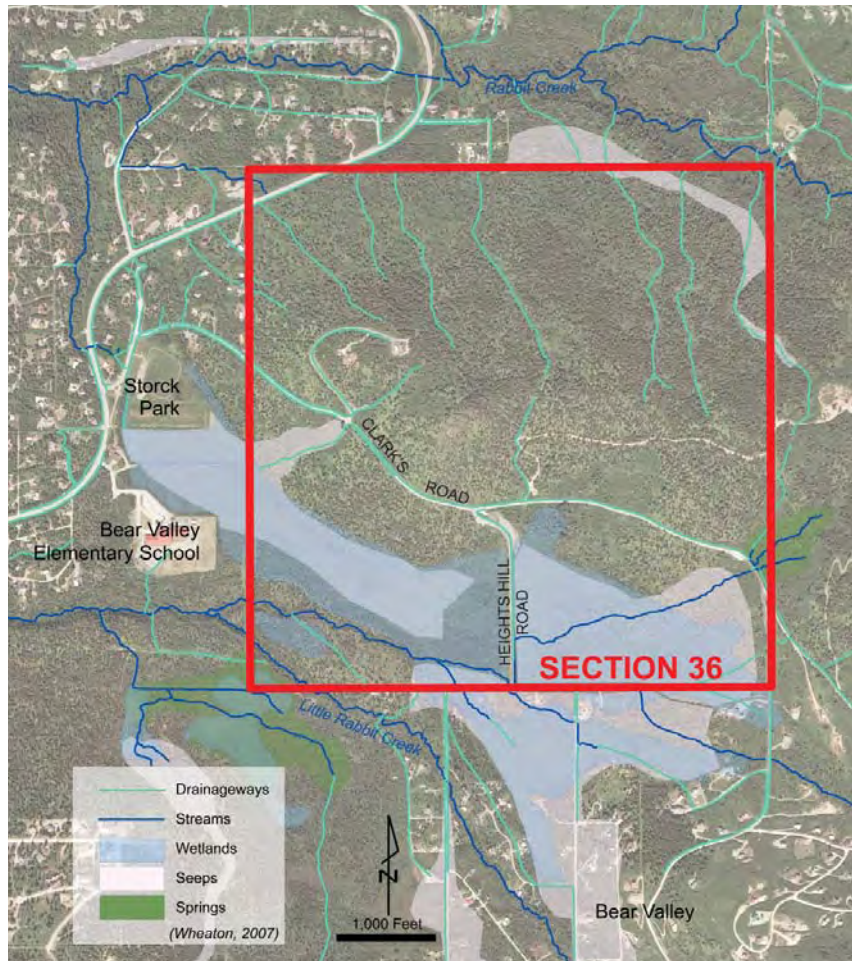


Figure 3-8: The Hydrology of Section 36

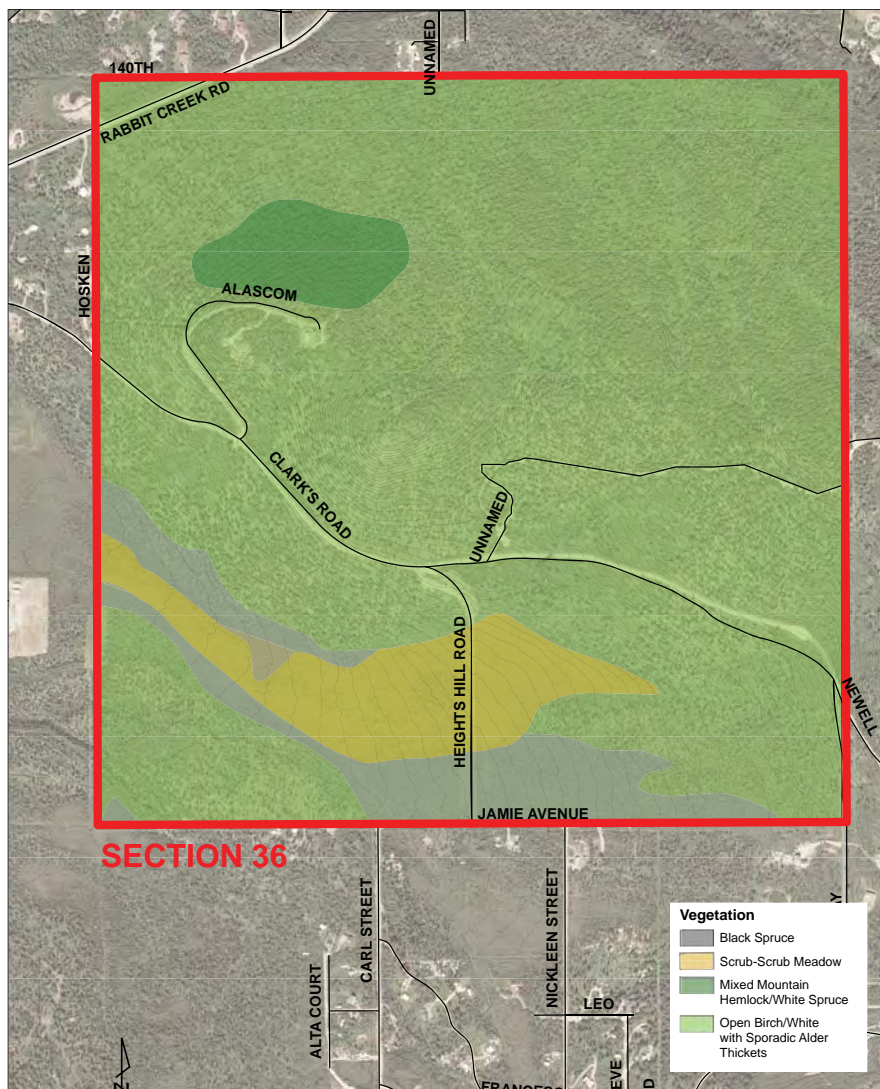


Figure 3-9: Vegetation

## Vegetation

The range of topography of Section 36 has formed two distinct physical features: a forested ridgeline and a wetland meadow. The northern portion of the site is a forested ridgeline with distinct knolls and varying slopes. The southern portion of the site contains a large relatively-flat forested wetlands area. In addition, a tributary of Little Rabbit Creek crosses the southwest corner of the section and a tributary of Rabbit Creek crosses the northeast corner (MOA, 1991).

The vegetation, including birch, poplar, alders, cottonwood, black spruce, devil's club, and sedges, varies with changes in topography. Upland and

The Diverse Vegetation of Section 36



wetlands vegetation can exist side by side due to changes in drainage, topography, and soil conditions. Forest cover along the slopes of the east-west trending mountain ridge of Section 36 include large white spruce and one of the northernmost stands of mature and healthy Mountain Hemlock forests in North America (MOA, 2002). The vegetation in low-lying areas consists primarily of black spruce and mixed scrub-shrub meadow (Figure 3-9).

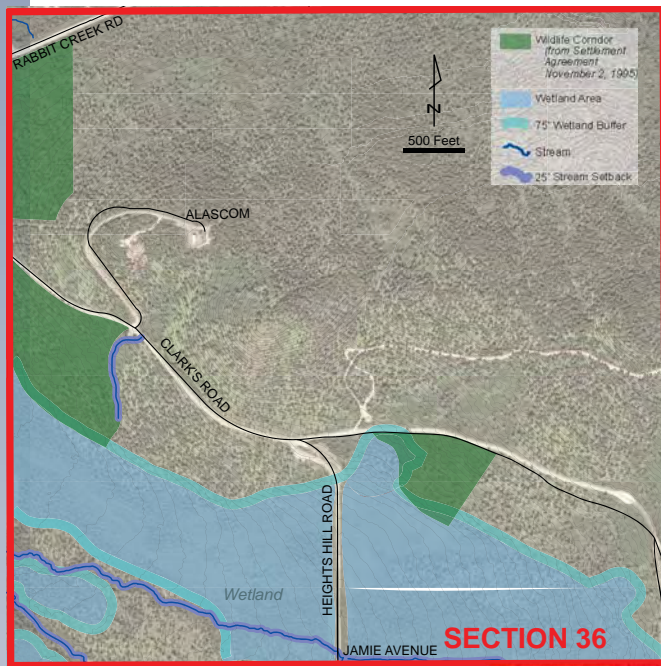


Figure 3-10: Wildlife Corridors

### Wildlife

Section 36 is one of the few unfragmented areas on the Hillside. It is a large contiguous block of land that contains several types of habitat intermixed in a natural mosaic that meets the seasonal needs of many species of birds and animals. The type of habitat in Section 36 is relatively similar to habitat in other portions of the Hillside (Westland, 1990). However, the Hillside area does not contain many other large areas of undeveloped public land that could be dedicated to habitat - resource protection as well as public recreation.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation Staff conducted a habitat and animal use survey in 1990 (Westland, 1990). Evidence of heavy moose browse indicated the exposed slope along both sides of Clark's Road serves an important winter range for moose. The wetland area has limited winter habitat value, but does provide a movement corridor and escape habitat for moose, bear, and other species.

For the initial platting of Section 36, wildlife corridors were designated as a condition of residential development (Figure 3-10). Although that plat was later superseded by a plat that did not contain this condition, the passive recreational development proposed for Section 36 will preserve the ability for much of Section 36 to continue to function as a "wildlife corridor."

### Mammals

#### *Moose*

Moose reside year-round in the Anchorage area, with a summer population of about 200 to 300 moose and as many as 700 to 1,000 moose in winter (ADF&G, 2000; ADF&G, 2004). Throughout Anchorage, moose tend to concentrate in greenbelts and open space, though they are also common in residential areas, particularly on the Hillside. Moose movement between seasonal ranges typically occurs during the spring when many moose move out of the Anchorage Bowl and into the Chugach Mountains, and during fall when many moose move back into the Anchorage Bowl for winter.

Moose in Alaska browse heavily on willow and birch shrubs as well as aspen and poplar saplings (Odemeyer, 1983; Seton, 2002). They also feed on aquatic vegetation during the summer and on ornamental foliage in residential areas. In general, males use areas with abundant forage, whereas females with calves tend to avoid deep snow in winter and frequent areas with fewer predators in summer (Miquelle, 1992).

Moose primarily use Section 36 during the fall and winter. The southerly exposed slope along both sides of Clark's Road serves as important winter range for moose (ADF&G, 2000). Calving does occur in the habitat type similar to the wetland area of Section 36. Moose are also known to move along the stream corridors in search of food (MOA, 2002).

#### *Black and Brown Bear*

The ADF&G estimates that there are 250 black bear and approximately 60 brown bear in the Anchorage area with 40 to 50 black bear and 5 to 10 brown bear in the Anchorage Bowl (ADF&G, 2000; Great Land Trust, 2000). Large parks such as the Far North Bicentennial Park (FNBPA) and the BLM Campbell Tract are considered important habitat for maintaining the local black and brown bear populations.

Bear use of Section 36 occurs primarily in the spring and early summer (Westlund, 1989), though local residents have seen bear into the summer season. Black bear utilize the riparian corridors in Section 36 primarily for migration and food gathering (MOA, 2002).

### *Small Mammals*

Other small mammals that live and breed on the Anchorage Hillside include coyotes, snowshoe hares, lynx, red fox, porcupine, red squirrel, and several species of microtine rodents. These animals are frequently seen on Section 36. Beaver, muskrat, and mink occur along waterways in the Hillside area.

### **Fish**

The ADF&G Atlas to the Catalog of Waters Important to the Spawning, Rearing or Migration of Anadromous Fishes identifies Rabbit Creek and Little Rabbit Creek as anadromous streams (ADF&G, 2007). Rabbit Creek supports king salmon, coho salmon, pink salmon, chum salmon, and Dolly Varden; Little Rabbit Creek supports coho salmon, pink salmon, and Dolly Varden (Johnson, 2007). A tributary of Little Rabbit Creek crosses the southwest corner of the section, and a tributary of Rabbit Creek crosses the northeast corner. The tributaries are not listed as anadromous water bodies.

### **Birds**

Much of the Hillside, including Section 36, can be characterized as having upland open forest. Bird species commonly found include owls, goshawks, grouse, ravens, magpies, and numerous common songbirds and passerine species.

### **Cultural Resources**

The State Historic Preservation Office and the Alaska Heritage Resource Survey records show that there are no known sites of historic or cultural significance in the general area of Section 36.

### **Scenic Resources**

Scenic or visual resources include panoramas, areas where land and water meet, and a variety of landforms that combine with vegetative patterns and water to create an outstanding scenic quality. Hillside residents and community council members have requested that no development occur adjacent to Clark's Road in order to preserve the visual view corridor of the mountains from Storck Park and Bear Valley Elementary School. Areas left undeveloped surrounded by development are an asset, providing a break in urbanization.



*Coyote*



*Black Bear*



*Lynx*

*Wildlife photography courtesy of Cheri Lipps, Anchorage, Alaska*



View of Anchorage and Mt. Susitna



View of Bear Valley and Chugach State Park



View of Downtown Anchorage



View of Chugach State Park

Expansive views from Section 36 to the surrounding landscape are extremely scenic (Figure 3-11). From the high points of the ridge, the vista spans 360 degrees with views of the inlet, Anchorage, and the distant mountains of the Alaska and Chugach Mountain Ranges. The scenery throughout the upland area is picturesque and offers views from non-typical angles of the surrounding landscape. Fire Island, Mount Spur, Bear Valley Elementary School, and Storck Park can be seen to the south/southwest. Views of the mountains to the north include Mount Susitna (Sleeping Lady) and Denali, with Flattop Mountain to the east. Long views of the mountains and inlet are interwoven with the foreground throughout the site, peeking through groves of birch and unique stands of mountain hemlock. Views from within the wetland areas are at a more personal scale, allowing participation in a diverse and flourishing wetlands habitat.

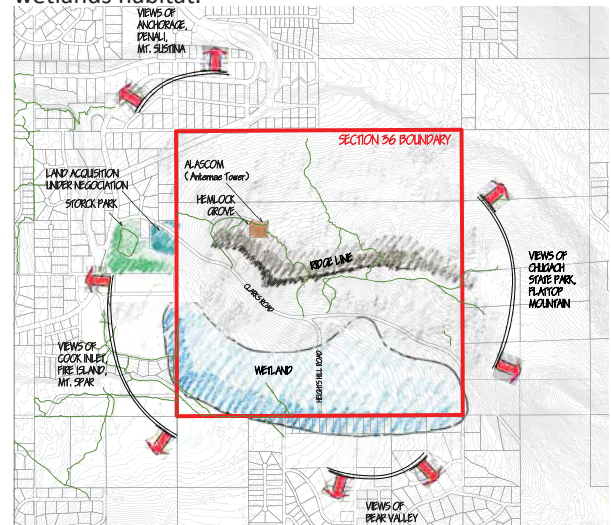


Figure 3-11: 360 degree views from Section 36

### Access and Public Facilities

Section 36 can be accessed from the New Seward Highway via Rabbit Creek Road and Clark’s Road, Rabbit Creek Road also cuts through the northwest corner of the site. Development within Section 36 is limited to a few roads and a single in-holding. State-owned Clark’s Road is a paved neighborhood collector street, bisecting the section in an east-west direction. Heights Hill Road, owned by the MOA, travels southward from Clark’s Road, crossing a wetlands area, and connects with Jamie Road and an adjoining residential subdivision. Alascom Drive extends off of Clark’s Road connecting to three transmission antenna tower sites on a 2.5-acre in-holding within the section.

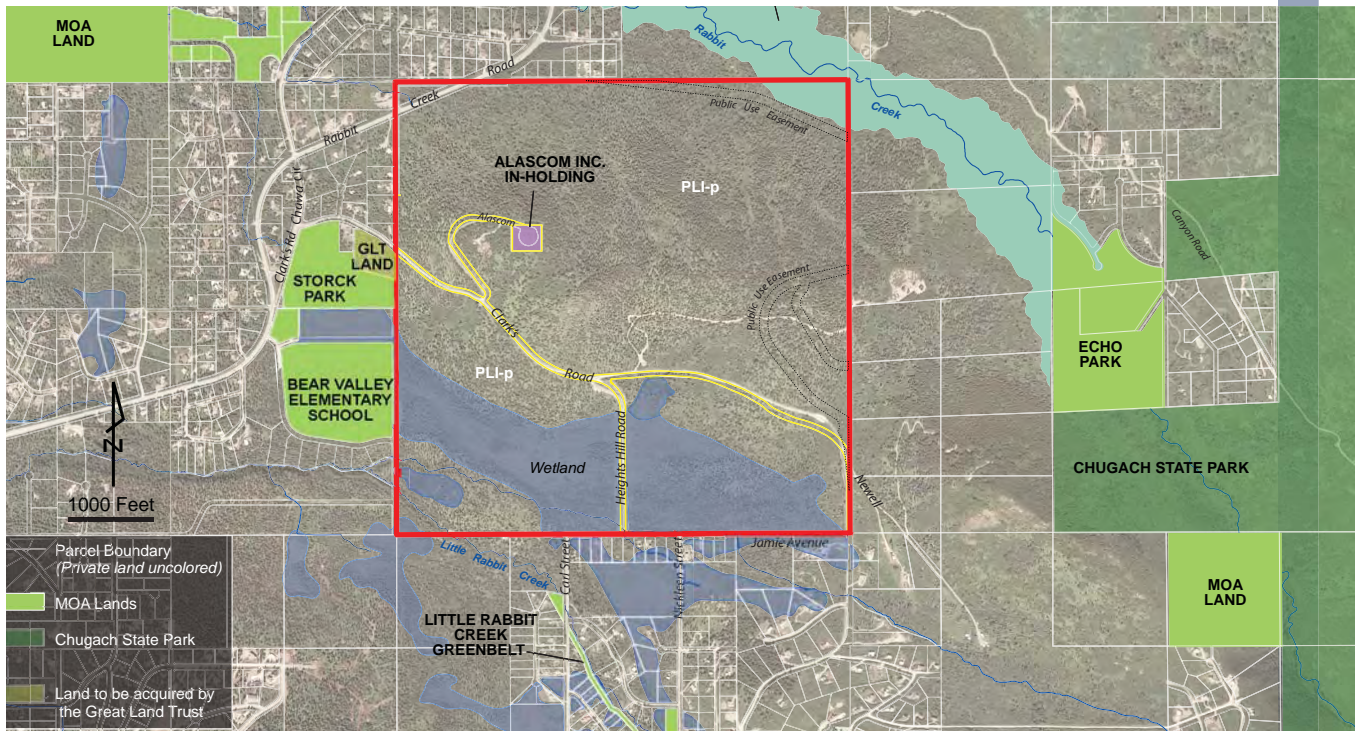


Figure 3-12: Land Ownership

Utilities such as natural gas, electricity, and telephone services are available to the surrounding residential neighborhoods. The substation at the intersection of Rabbit Creek Road and Golden View Drive services southeast Anchorage. A 12.5-kilovolt electric distribution line leads to the Alascom Inc. transmission tower site located on Section 36 and runs north-south along the entire east section line. There is no existing or planned public water or sewer system available to this area (MOA, 1991).

### Area Land Ownership and Use

Section 36 is located in Southeast Anchorage, in the Upper Hillside area; east of Rabbit Creek Road and south of Rabbit Creek. Chugach State Park is located one-half mile to the east. Surrounding land use, as outlined in the Section 36 Land Use Study, consists of primarily private vacant land and partially developed large-lot residential subdivisions to the north; vacant large-lot residentially zoned land to the east; vacant land and partially developed large-lot residential subdivisions to the south; and Storck Park, Rabbit Creek Fire Station 10, Bear Valley Elementary School, vacant land, and partially developed large-lot residential subdivisions to the west (Figure 3-12).

According to Anchorage Recording District Plat No. 2008-100 (Figure 3-4), Public Use Easements are being provided for the benefit of the undeveloped properties to the east and will be permanently located when an access road is constructed. The existing pioneer jeep trail is a private access for the properties to the east of Section 36 and will be allowed to continue while the properties remain unsubdivided and alternate physical and legal access does not exist. Upon subdivision of any one of the properties, a new road to the subdivided property must be built to Municipal standards utilizing the public use easement(s) dedicated by the plat for this purpose. Use of the pioneer jeep trail will automatically terminate on those portions of the trail where access is now being provided by the newly constructed road(s).

As stated in the Hillside District Plan, southeast Anchorage has the highest density of vacant residential land in the bowl. This area also includes many development issues including steep slopes, shallow water tables and decreasing water quality. The plan encourages growth within the lower hillside. As illustrated on the Land Use Map, it is recommended that portions of residential development in the southeast be of higher density than the typical one acre lot which is common to much of the hillside (Figure 3-13).

Map 2.2  
Hillside Land Use Plan Map - Public Hearing Draft

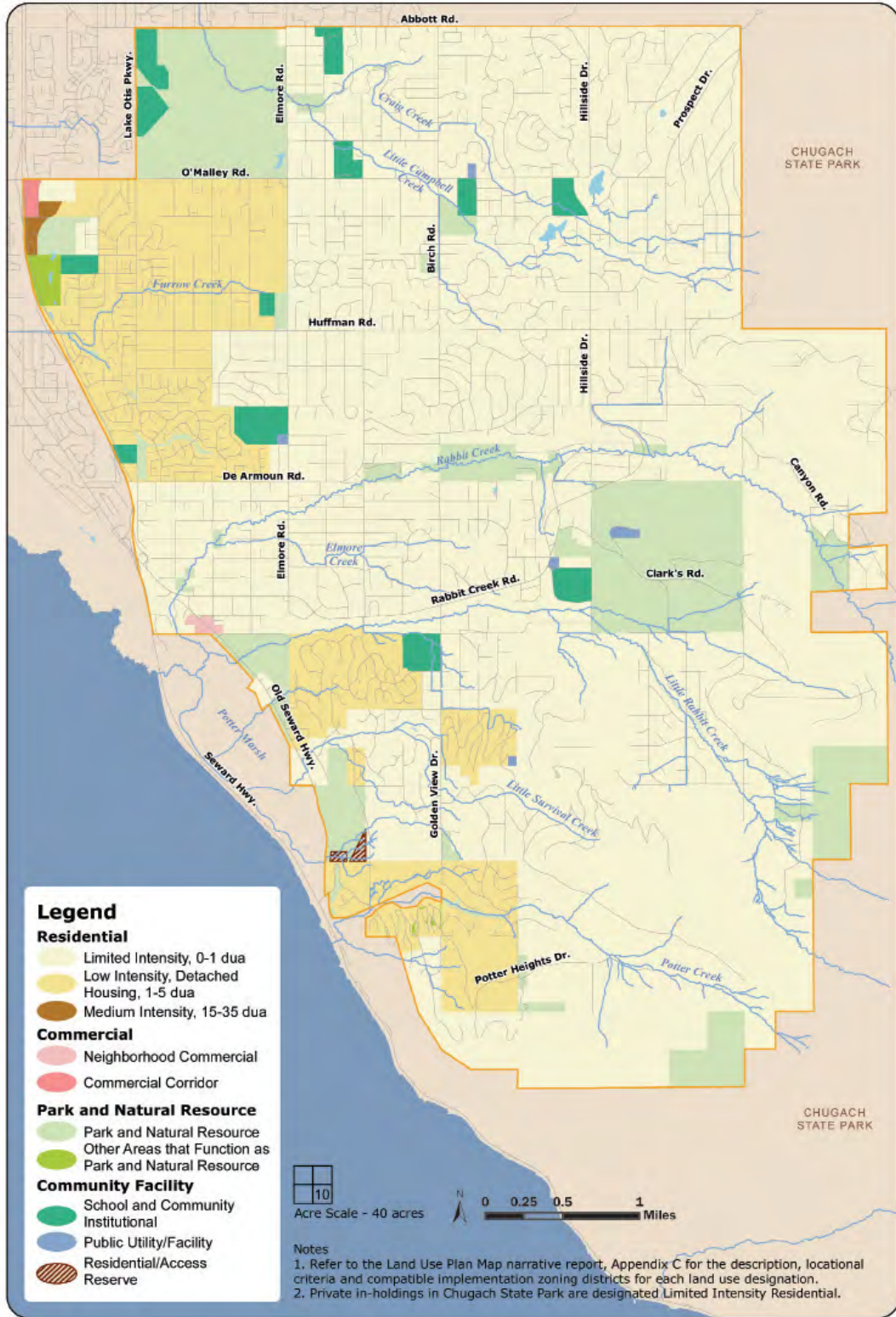


Figure 3-13: Hillside District Plan Land Use Map

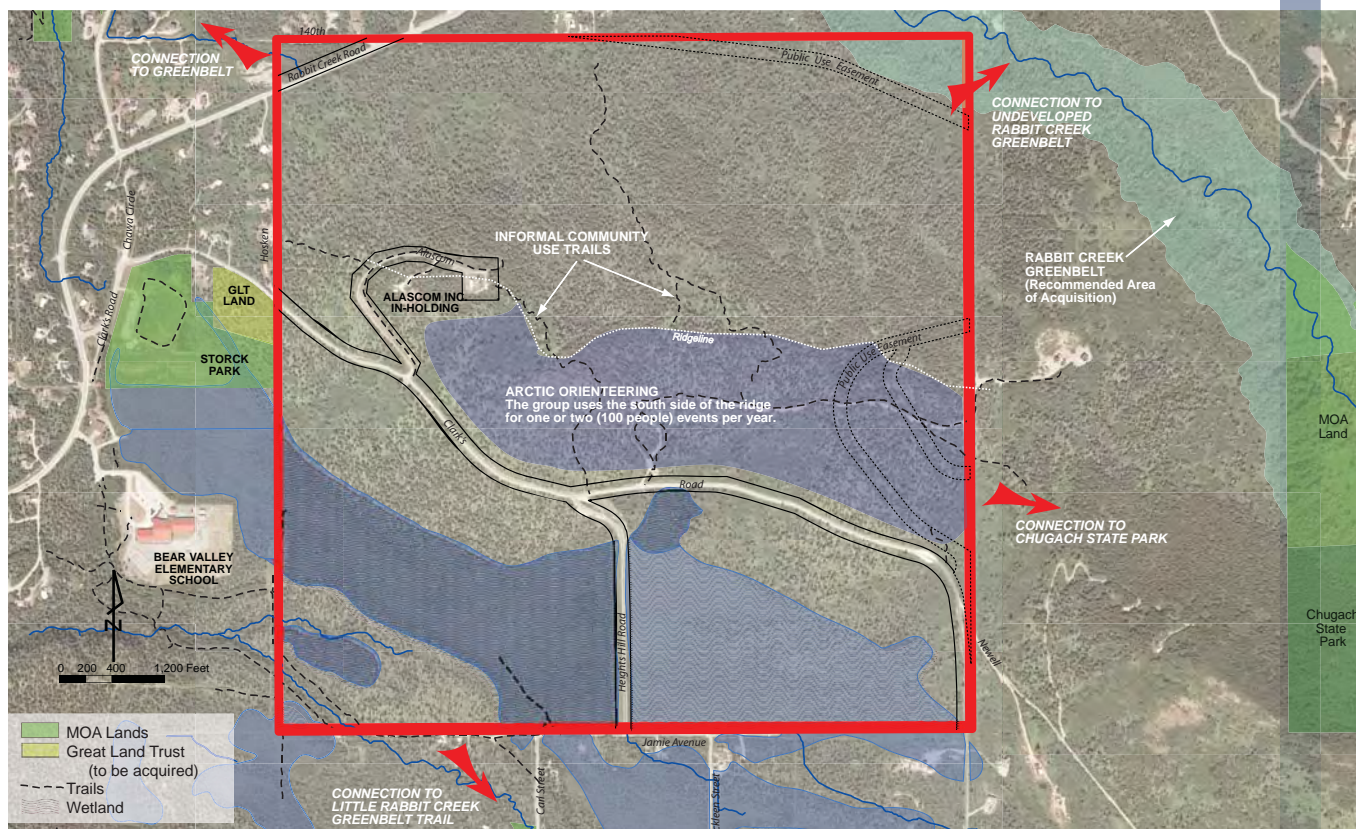


Figure 3-14: Recreational Use of Section 36

A 2.5-acre Alascom Inc. in-holding contains a Federal Communications Commission-licensed communication facility. The only other facilities within Section 36 are three antenna towers on HLB land adjacent to Alascom in-holding that are operated by the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

Storck Park is a 20-acre community park with an informal ball field, a soccer field, a picnic shelter, and a parking lot. To the east about one-half mile is Chugach State Park, which contains 495,000 acres of wilderness.

The Rabbit Creek Greenbelt extends around Section 36 on the north and east sides. According to the adopted Rabbit Creek Greenbelt Plan (1987), the northeast corner of Section 36 is included within the greenbelt. The greenbelt consists of 100 acres of MOA-owned parkland that was once inaccessible to the surrounding neighborhoods due to dense vegetation and the absence of trails and trailheads. In 2002, the Rabbit Creek Community Council and the Anchorage Trails and Greenways Coalition partnered with the MOA Parks and Recreation Department to construct a 36-foot footbridge and over a mile of trails that joined

three trailheads in the south and east portions of the greenbelt.

### Recreational Use

The informal trails of Section 36 are used primarily for hiking in the summer and snowshoeing in the winter (Figure 3-14). A primary route appears to be from Bear Valley near the intersection of Clark's Road and Heights Hill Road to the ridge. Tracks left by 4 wheelers have been observed in numerous locations of Section 36 including the ridge top.

The Arctic Orienteering Club is one of the few organized groups that currently uses Section 36, holding one or two events per year with approximately one hundred participants. Boy Scout Troop 26, whose members mostly live in southeast Anchorage, presently use Section 36 lands for various activities. Arctic Airwalkers is an organized group of paragliders that have expressed an interest in improving a cleared area adjacent to Heights Hill Road for a paragliding landing site. This decision will be resolved outside of this master planning process through an MOA permitting process.

## Relationship to the Municipality of Anchorage Park System

The purpose of the master plan is to guide development of Section 36 in a manner sensitive to its hillside location, valuable natural resources, scenic vistas, potential recreation/outdoor education opportunities and connections to recreational facilities, including Chugach State Park. Due to the size of Section 36, it is important to evaluate how it fits into the city-wide system of park facilities. The planning process explored a wide range of possible options for the use of Section 36 and included people from throughout the community, in addition to those living nearby, to get diverse expertise, vision, and insight into this planning process.

The vision and mission of the MOA Strategic Action Plan 2005-2008 strives to provide for the diverse needs of the Anchorage community.

*“Our mission at the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department is to provide a network of public spaces and programs throughout the community that preserve and enhance Anchorage’s heritage, lifestyle, special places, and natural areas for future generations:*

*“Healthy Parks, Healthy People, Healthy Future”*

*Our vision for Anchorage is a sustainable and accessible system of recreational facilities, parks, programs, trails, and natural resource areas that meet year-round neighborhood and community-wide needs and are a catalyst for bringing these direct benefits to individuals, families and the community.”*

The various parks in Anchorage provide a unique diversity of high quality recreational opportunities, which includes walking, running, biking, nordic and alpine skiing, skijoring, dog mushing, and rollerblading.

Section 36 consists of 640 acres of primarily undeveloped land located in the Bear Valley area of southeast Anchorage and is included in the Southeast Park District, as defined by MOA Parks and Recreation Department. A number of park and land use plans address Section 36 as discussed below.

## Strategic Action Plan 2005-2008

In June 2005, the MOA Parks and Recreation Department published a draft of the Strategic Action Plan 2005-2008, providing flexible recommendations that can evolve in response to changing conditions. Large tracks of undeveloped land have become major urban parks and greenbelts in Anchorage. To support these recreation areas, Anchorage Bowl residents pay \$64.78 per person per year for parks, which is proving inadequate to provide the services and maintenance expected by the public. The average cost for providing municipal parks in the United States is \$95 per person.

The Strategic Action Plan developed priorities through a public process. The plan includes eight goals and their associated objectives.

**Goal 1: Improve Maintenance and Stewardship of What We Have**

**Goal 2: Foster Private-Public Partnerships**

**Goal 3: Create and Use Parks as Community Building Blocks**

**Goal 4: Develop and Enhance Parks as Economic Engines**

**Goal 5: Provide Balanced Services and Facilities for a Diverse Community**

**Goal 6: Improve Access and Connections**

**Goal 7: Steward our Natural Resources**

**Goal 8: Create a Strong Parks and Recreation Organization**

Many of these goals correlate with and support the recommendations in the “Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan” discussed below.

This project, the Section 36 Master Plan, is included on the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) list in the Parks and Recreation Strategic Action Plan 2005-2008. There are also a number of other CIP projects outlined in the Southeast Park District Plan.