

Chugiak–Eagle River Comprehensive Plan

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE



CHUGIAK-EAGLE RIVER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Adopted January 12, 1993
(Assembly Ordinance 92-133)

Prepared by the
Physical Planning Division
Department of Community Planning and Development



Municipality of Anchorage
Tom Fink, Mayor

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

ASSEMBLY

Pat Abney
Jim Barnett
Mark Begich
Craig Campbell
Bill Faulkner
Heather Flynn

Jim Kubitz
Chuck Landers
Brian Porter
Dick Traini
John Wood

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

Priscilla Wohl, Chairman
Bob Ballow
Jim Crawford
Jack Gwaltney
Art Jacobs

Joe Murdy
Bill Reeves
Tim Spernak
Harold Wirum

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Michael J. Meehan, AICP, Director

Physical Planning Division

Jill Smythe, Manager
Cathy Hammond
Tom Nelson
Sue Perry
Susan Redwood
Thede Tobish

Cartographics

Lisa Ameen
Fred Carpenter
Phil Manke

Consultant Services

Sally Rue, Resource Management Group

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	1
I. 1979 Comprehensive Plan	1
II. 1993 Comprehensive Plan	2
REGIONAL AND HISTORICAL SETTING	7
I. Location	7
II. History	8
POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT	17
I. Population	17
A. Recent Population Trends	17
B. Population Composition	21
C. Future Population	22
II. Employment	25
A. Labor Force Characteristics	25
B. Recent Employment Trends	25
C. Future Employment	28
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	29
I. Climate	29
A. Air Quality	29
II. Topography	30
A. Slope	30
III. Surficial Geology	33
A. Bedrock	33
1. Earthquakes	33
B. Surficial Materials	33
1. Mass Wasting	34
C. Soils	34
D. Permafrost	34
IV. Hydrology	35
A. Streams and Lakes	35
1. Flooding	35
2. Drainage	35
3. Water Quality	36
B. Groundwater	36
C. Wetlands	36
V. Vegetation and Wildlife	37
A. Vegetation	37
B. Fisheries	37
C. Wildlife	38
VI. Land Suitability Mapping	38
COMMUNITY OVERVIEW	45
I. Land Use	45
A. Overall Patterns and Trends	45
B. Residential Development	46
C. Commercial Development	49
D. Industrial Development	49
E. Public and Institutional Uses	49

	Page
F. Vacant Land	50
G. Future Land Use Needs	50
II. Housing	51
A. Housing Trends and Characteristics	51
B. Housing Variety	54
C. Housing Quality	54
D. Future Housing Needs	55
III. Land Ownership and Management Status	55
A. Ownership Patterns	55
1. Public Lands	56
2. Native Lands	56
B. Land Management Agreements	56
1. Agreement of Compromise and Settlement, 1979	59
2. North Anchorage Land Agreement, 1982	59
3. Greenbelt Exchange Agreement, 1986	60
4. State - Municipality of Anchorage Agreement, 1986	60
5. Entitlement Facilitation Agreement, 1986	61
6. Agreement of Alaska Railroad Corp. and Eklutna, Inc., 1987	61
7. Cook Inlet Region, Inc. and Eklutna, Inc., Gravel Agreement, 1989	62
8. Mental Health Trust Lands	62
IV. Public Facilities and Services	62
A. Public Safety	65
1. Police	65
2. Fire Protection and Emergency Response	65
B. Health and Social Services	67
C. Education	68
D. Parks, Greenways, Open Space and Recreation Facilities	73
E. Utilities	83
1. Water	83
2. Wastewater	87
3. Solid Waste	88
F. Transportation	89
V. Historic and Archaeological Resources	90
 GUIDELINES FOR GROWTH	 97
I. Economic Development	97
1. Goals	97
2. Objectives	97
3. Policies/Strategies	98
II. Natural Environment	98
1. Goals	98
2. Objectives	98
3. Policies/Strategies	99
III. Land Use and Housing	101
A. Growth	101
1. Goals	101
2. Objectives	102
3. Policies/Strategies	102
B. Community Design	102
1. Goals	102
2. Objectives	103
3. Policies/Strategies	103

	Page
C. Housing and Residential Development	103
1. Goals	103
2. Objectives	104
3. Policies/Strategies	104
D. Commercial and Industrial Development	105
1. Goals	105
2. Objectives	105
3. Policies/Strategies	106
IV. Public Facilities and Services	106
1. Goals	106
2. Objectives	106
3. Policies/Strategies	107
A. Police	107
1. Goals	107
2. Objectives	107
3. Policies/Strategies	107
B. Fire Protection and Emergency Response	108
1. Goals	108
2. Objectives	108
3. Policies/Strategies	108
C. Health and Social Services	108
1. Goals	108
2. Objectives	109
3. Policies/Strategies	109
D. Education	109
1. Goals	109
2. Objectives	109
3. Policies/Strategies	109
E. Parks, Open Space, Greenways and Recreation Facilities	110
1. Goals	110
2. Objectives	110
3. Policies/Strategies	111
F. Water and Wastewater	112
1. Goals	112
2. Objectives	112
3. Policies/Strategies	112
G. Solid Waste	113
1. Goals	113
2. Objectives	113
H. Transportation	113
1. Goals	113
2. Objectives	113
3. Policies/Strategies	114
V. Historic and Archaeological Resources	114
1. Goals	114
2. Objectives	114
3. Policies/Strategies	114
LAND USE PLAN	117
I. Major Issues	117
A. Community Character	117
B. Extension of Public Sewer	118

	Page
C. Proper Installation and Maintenance of Septic Systems	118
D. Extension of Public Water	119
E. Economic Development	119
F. Transportation	119
G. Schools	119
H. Provision of Other Public Facilities	120
I. Land Ownership/Land Management Agreements	120
J. Environmental Features	120
II. Land Use Plan Classifications	121
A. Residential	121
B. Commercial	122
C. Commercial Recreation	127
D. Industrial	127
E. Mixed Use	127
F. Transportation-Related	128
G. Public Lands and Institutions	128
H. Parks	128
I. Environmentally Sensitive Lands	129
J. Not Designated	129
IMPLEMENTATION	131
I. Regulatory Controls	131
II. Capital Improvements Program	132
III. Functional Plans and Studies	133
A. Long Range Transportation Plan	133
B. Updated Official Streets and Highways Plan	133
C. Area Drainage Plan	134
D. School Facilities Plan	134
E. Updated Parks and Trails Plan	134
F. Updated Sewer and Water Master Plans	134
G. Pedestrian and Circulation Plan for Downtown Eagle River	135
H. Street and Highway Landscape Plan	135
I. Police/Fire Protection/Health and Social Services Plans	135
III. Heritage Land Bank	135
PLAN REVISION PROCESS	137
APPENDICES	139
Appendix A — Economic Forecast Assumptions	139
Appendix B — Methodology for Land Use Projections	147
Appendix C — Trails Committee	153
Appendix D — Antenna Siting	159

MAPS

	Page
Vicinity Map	3
Community Council Areas	19
PM10 Air Quality Problem Zone	31
Critical Habitat Areas	39
Vacant Land Suitability	41
Sub-Areas	47
Land Ownership and Management Status	57
Public Facilities	63
Existing and Projected Schools	69
Parks, Open Spaces and Recreational Facilities	75
Existing Dedicated Trails	77
Assembly-Adopted Planned Trails	79
Location and Number of Five-Acre Neighborhood Parks Needed	81
Areas Served by Water and Wastewater	85
Official Streets and Highways Plan Map	91
Transit Routes	93
Recommended Land Use Plan	123
Recommended Residential Density	125
Conceptual Trails Plan	155
Requested Snowmobile Trails	157

FIGURES

Figure 1 Population by Community Council, Chugiak-Eagle River, 1980, 1985 and 1989	18
Figure 2 Past Population Trends and Forecast, Municipality of Anchorage, 1960 - 2010	24
Figure 3 Past Population Trends and Forecast, Chugiak-Eagle River, 1960 - 2010	24
Figure 4 Employment Trends by Industry, Chugiak-Eagle River, 1980 - 1990	26
Figure 5 Employment Composition, Chugiak-Eagle River, 1980 and 1990	26
Figure 6 Housing Stock Trends, Chugiak-Eagle River, 1970 - 1990	52
Figure 7 Housing Stock by Structure Type, Chugiak-Eagle	52

TABLES

Table 1 Population Projections, Municipality of Anchorage, 2000 - 2010	22
Table 2 Population Projections, Chugiak-Eagle River, 2000 - 2010	23
Table 3 Past and Projected Population, Municipality of Anchorage and Chugiak-Eagle River Area, 1960 - 2010	23
Table 4 Slope Characteristics, Chugiak-Eagle River Area	30
Table 5 Vacant Land Suitability by Sub-Area, Chugiak-Eagle River Area, 1991	43
Table 6 Existing Land Use, Chugiak-Eagle River Area, 1987	46
Table 7 Current and Projected School Enrollment Capacity, Chugiak-Eagle River Area, 1990/91-1996/97	71
Table 8 Projected School Enrollment, Chugiak-Eagle River Area, 1990 - 2010	72



Photo: Chugiak-Eagle River Star

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Chugiak-Eagle River is a dynamic community. Over the past fifty years, it has undergone continuing population growth and change. During the same period, it experienced major changes in land ownership, local government, economic development and public improvements, as well as in public attitudes and values.

The most rapid changes occurred during the past two decades when the area's population grew more than three-fold, from 5,832 people in 1970 to 25,324 in 1990. One result was a need for direction on how the community should grow, what public services and facilities would be needed, and how they could best be provided. Reflecting a desire for self-determination, efforts to develop a comprehensive plan were initiated by community residents in the mid-1970's. They culminated in 1979 with adoption of the Eagle River-Chugiak-Eklutna Comprehensive Plan by the Municipality of Anchorage.

I. 1979 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The 1979 Eagle River-Chugiak-Eklutna Comprehensive Plan provided community residents and public officials with a policy document to guide development decisions for the Chugiak-Eagle River area. It also provided a vision, or an expression of local desires, of future growth.

The Plan included land use and residential intensity classification maps indicating desired land use patterns and densities of development over the next twenty years. In addition, it included recommendations directing the location and design of public utilities and services, as well as recommending a proper level and form of regulatory control. Recognizing the area's recreation and scenic open space resources, the Plan also recommended the establishment of greenbelt programs with multi-use trail systems for Eagle River, Fire Creek and Peters Creek to complement nearby mountainous areas within Chugach State Park.

The 1979 Plan was generally successful in guiding decisions affecting community development during the 1980's. It was effective in the establishment of the R-10 zone (Alpine/Slope District), and it guided the application of areawide zoning. It also influenced the location and sizing of the sewerage collection system expansion, as well as establishment of the Eagle River greenbelt, which later became part of Chugach State Park.

The 1979 Plan, however, was based upon a number of assumptions and projections which changed in ways that were unanticipated. Many major Statewide energy development and public works projects, which were included in growth projections at that time, never eventuated. The rapid heating and cooling of the State and local economies in the 1980's, caused by wide fluctuations in oil prices and by institutional lending practices, also affected rates of population growth and private development.

Other unanticipated events affecting the Chugiak-Eagle River area included development of the Eklutna Water Project; the settlement of various land claims among the State, Municipality,

Alaska Railroad, Eklutna, Inc. and Cook Inlet Region, Inc.; and construction of a new major highway across Eagle River connecting Eagle River Loop Road to Hiland Road.

Chugiak-Eagle River's population has doubled since the 1979 Plan was adopted. The addition of new residents, coupled with unanticipated events of the last decade, has made the 1979 Plan outdated. To continue to be a usable and effective guide to community development, the Comprehensive Plan has therefore been updated, based on current information and the most reasonable and acceptable projections of economic and population growth, to reflect current community aspirations.

II. 1993 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve as a practical guide for community residents, business investors and public officials on decisions regarding the development of Chugiak-Eagle River. As a policy document, it is intended to outline general strategies for both land use development and the installation of major public facilities and services, including water, sewer, transportation, parks, trails and schools. It also outlines basic strategies for the conservation and protection of certain natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas.

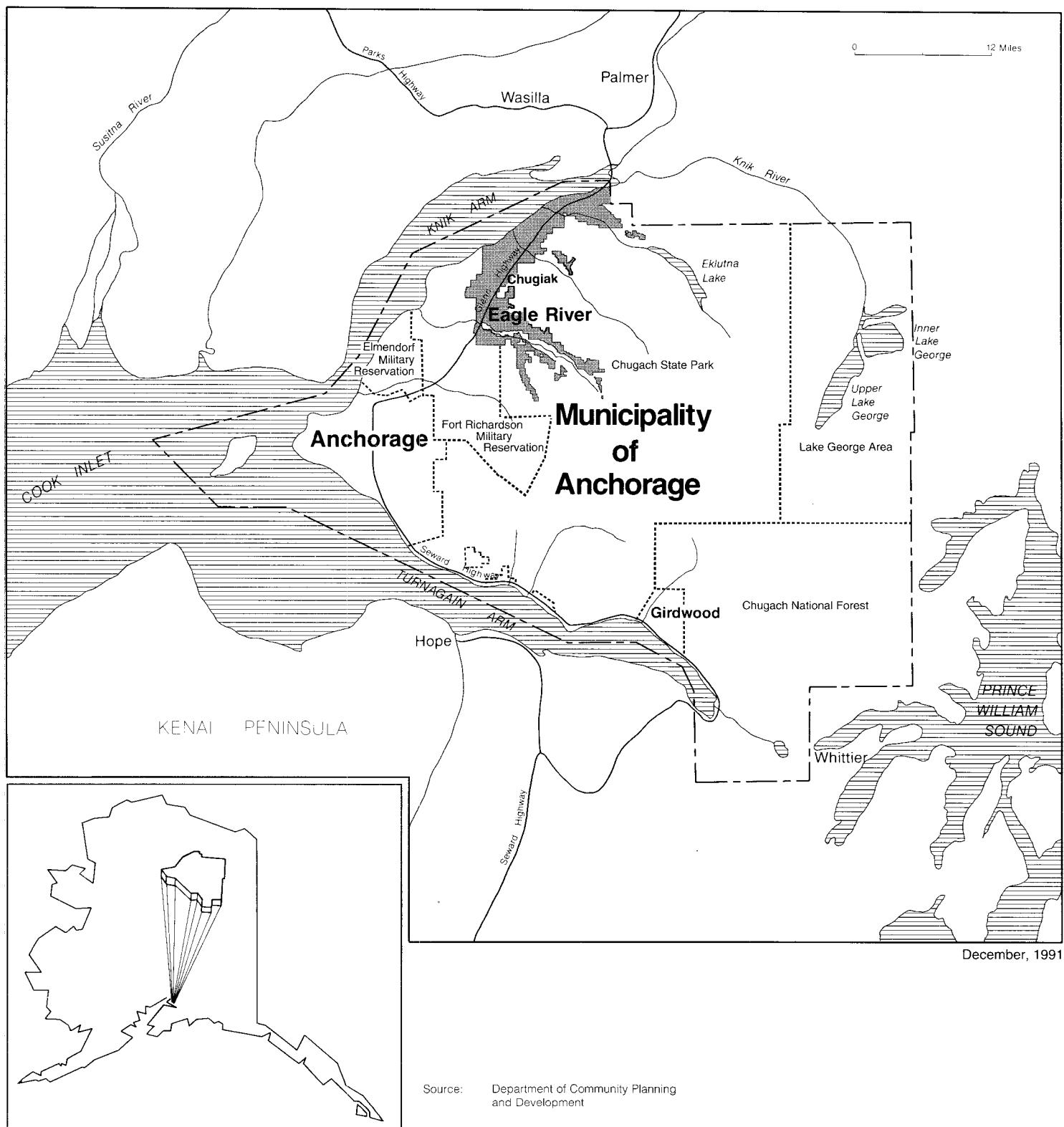
The Comprehensive Plan guides development but does not by itself actually control it. Other means are used to implement the Plan. The most commonly used and familiar method is zoning which regulates the uses of land and is specific to individual properties. The Comprehensive Plan, on the other hand, is generalized and non-parcel specific. It is a guide to rezoning; it does not establish the actual zoning boundaries.

The essence of the Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan is that it is an expression of community intentions and aspirations. Chugiak-Eagle River is a diverse community with a variety of physical characteristics, human activities, lifestyles, and values. Like the earlier 1979 Plan, this updated Plan has attempted to forge a consensus based upon the acceptance of a variety of identified local needs, values, and aspirations. The Plan recognizes the desire for new economic development, while still retaining those natural and man-made features which have made the area an attractive and desirable place to live. It anticipates the need for a mix of future housing types and densities which reflect urban to rural lifestyles.

The Plan focuses on the physical development patterns of the community. It is intended to deal with conditions and events expected to occur during the next 20 years, and attendant resulting needs or demands for public facilities and services. This length of time is the usual limit of demographic and economic forecasting, and corresponds to the time period used in the design of most major public facilities.

The Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan includes those areas within the Municipality which are located north of the Fort Richardson Military Reservation and between Chugach State Park and Knik Arm. (See Vicinity Map.) Separate comprehensive plans cover the Anchorage Bowl and Turnagain Arm. However, although they cover separate geographic areas, these

Vicinity Map



plans are not mutually exclusive. The land and public facility requirements, as well as population allocations, are derived from demographic projections which treat each area as part of an integrated economic unit.

The central issue which this Plan addresses is community growth—its proper pattern and density. Chugiak-Eagle River's population, for example, is anticipated to increase by nearly 20,000 over the next twenty years and will create a need for almost 7,000 new dwelling units. A major issue is where new housing will be located, and at what density.

Associated with this central issue of growth are other peripheral, yet significant, interlocking community issues. Such issues include expansion and improvement of public facilities and services, new economic development, conservation of resources and community self-determination.

The development and organization of this Plan is based upon fundamental principles of the community planning process. In its most basic form, the process revolves around the following three questions:

- Where is the community now?
- Where does the community want to go?
- How does the community get to where it wants to go?

The early chapters of the Plan focus on where the community is now. An overview of major events and trends which have affected Chugiak-Eagle River in the past is included. This historical perspective enables a better understanding of the community today, as well as showing how it fits within the larger municipal and regional setting.

Past and present population and employment characteristics in the area are described, and projections of future population and employment growth are made. The underlying assumptions are also described. These projections are very important because they are the basis for land demand analyses used in development of the land use plan.

The natural physical environment of the area is reviewed. In addition, the suitability of lands within the Chugiak-Eagle River area for future development is evaluated. This suitability evaluation is an important factor in determining how and where future development can best be located.

The built environment, including existing land use patterns and ownership, is described. Current land status, issues/concerns and projected needs for facilities and services are also addressed.

Chapters dealing with guidelines for growth and the land use plan address the question, "Where does the community want to go?" The goals, objectives, policies, and strategies directly reflect the aspirations and values of the community. They clearly express what the community believes in and stands for. The land use plan lays out the preferred land development pattern for the next twenty years. It also provides the basis for determining the size and location of various public facilities and services that will be needed to serve the area.

The chapters dealing with plan implementation and revision address the question, "How does the community get to where it wants to go?" Implementation measures are recommended to carry out the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, and the relationships between this plan and other programs and activities are identified. Finally, methods for continuing the comprehensive planning process are addressed. This is important if the Plan is to be used as a practical guide for community development over the next several years.

Included at the end of this document is a series of appendices. They contain details on economic forecast assumptions and the methodology used to project future land requirements. Additional appendices document information on trails prepared by a local trails committee and antenna siting.

The importance of the Comprehensive Plan to the Chugiak-Eagle River community is the simple logic upon which it is based. That logic is that it is wise to look ahead, to anticipate rather than to react, to coordinate rather than to compete, and to make decisions that are based on shared community objectives.