

LAND USE PLAN

The Chugiak-Eagle River Comprehensive Plan is a policy document designed to guide future development decisions in the Chugiak-Eagle River area. As such, it outlines general development strategies for both land use and the installation of major public facilities and services, including water, sewer, transportation, parks and schools. It also outlines basic strategies for the protection of natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas.

The land use recommendations evolved from a process in which four alternative land use plans were developed. Each alternative presented different land use density and locational options, and proposed different levels and locations for public facilities. Development of the land use plan was based on public response to the alternatives, an evaluation of demographic and economic trends, analyses of building constraints, and consideration of major issues facing the area.

Demographic and economic trends and development constraints are described in earlier chapters of this report. The major issues facing Chugiak-Eagle River are discussed below, followed by a description of each of the proposed land use classifications.

I. MAJOR ISSUES

A. COMMUNITY CHARACTER

A major goal of Chugiak-Eagle River residents is to preserve and enhance the identity of established community areas and to retain a diversity of lifestyles.

With an 80 percent increase in population projected during the next twenty years, some portions of Chugiak-Eagle River will become increasingly urbanized and will generate a need for more multi-family housing. Other areas, many of them already well established, wish to retain a low density, rural lifestyle. Mobile homes will be retained in some of these areas.

As the community grows, the retention of key natural and environmentally sensitive areas through development limitations, site design and/or the provision of parks, trails and open space will help to define and enrich the evolving character of the area.

There is also a desire for Chugiak-Eagle River to remain primarily as a bedroom community. This will have several impacts. A large number of persons will continue to drive to Anchorage to shop and work which, in turn, makes the need for an adequate road network very important. Also under this development scenario, single family homes will be most in demand and the primary commercial and industrial facilities will be local-serving rather than region-serving.

B. EXTENSION OF PUBLIC SEWER

Decisions involving the extension of public sewer service greatly impact allowable densities of development. The entire Chugiak-Eagle River area is within the Anchorage Wastewater Service Area. Thus, all piped sewer service will involve the Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility, if only through a requirement for the establishment of a Trunk Improvement District.

In the future, new areas of higher density development should be located to increase the efficiency of the existing public infrastructure. With the decline in available State and federal funds, it will become increasingly important to ensure that public services are delivered efficiently and that construction and operating costs are kept to a minimum.

If growth is compact and is concentrated adjacent to areas which already have sewer service (infill), the extension of services and facilities can be undertaken in an efficient and cost-effective manner. However, if new areas are developed distant from, and without regard to, existing public facilities (leap-frogging), the entire community will bear the strain of trying to meet the demand for services and facilities.

Based on these considerations, it is the policy of this Plan that, during the next twenty years, public sewer services will only be extended beyond present service districts (including the western Hiland Road and Eagle Management areas in the Eagle River area) to the powder reserve, and to South Birchwood Loop Road to serve the area between the old and new Glenn Highways from South Birchwood to North Birchwood.

It is also a policy of this Plan that residential areas designated on the Recommended Residential Density map at densities of less than one dwelling unit per acre shall not have public sewer service extended during the life of this Plan, unless needed for reasons of public health.

In addition, it is a policy of this Plan that public sewer service will not be extended unless public water is also made available. However, if sewerage is extended to an area for health reasons, public water may also be extended but it will not be required.

C. PROPER INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE OF SEPTIC SYSTEMS

In earlier years, septic systems were often improperly installed or were installed on lots that were too small. Regulations now require that lots with on-site septic systems must be at least 40,000 square feet in area and that space for a back-up system must be provided.

Proper installation and maintenance of septic systems is still important. Otherwise, there is a possibility of surface water and groundwater (water in wells) contamination.

D. EXTENSION OF PUBLIC WATER

Public water systems are systems which are publicly regulated but may be publicly or privately owned. Except where sewerage is extended to an area for health reasons, it is the general policy of this Plan that where public sewerage is extended, public water should also be extended.

Many areas will continue to be served by on-site wells. As indicated above, it is important that wells be protected from contamination.

E. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Plan recognizes a desire for economic diversity and the need for increased local employment opportunities. Growth in local employment would have an impact on the transportation system as a high proportion of Chugiak-Eagle River's labor force currently commutes to work in Anchorage.

The Plan assumes that the local employment level will rise to 13 percent of the area's total projected population by the year 2010. This involves the addition of another 3,200 jobs and represents more than a 115 percent increase over the 2,700 local jobs in 1990.

It not reasonable to assume that Chugiak-Eagle River will develop a region-serving economic base comparable to Anchorage (where over 40 percent of the population is employed locally) within the next twenty years. However, the Plan does encourage the establishment of region-serving entities, where appropriate. It also encourages the establishment of commercial recreation and ecotourism activities.

The Plan addresses the needs of small-scale local entrepreneurs by recommending additional industrial areas. It also makes provision for opportunities to attract larger, region-serving industrial development to the area.

F. TRANSPORTATION

Several transportation issues face the Chugiak-Eagle River area, particularly under conditions of increased population. For example, many local roads need paving and upgrading. Paving is especially needed in some areas to help reduce air quality problems. In addition, as the population grows and areas develop at higher densities, more accessible and more frequent transit service is likely to be demanded. There will also be a need for continued upgrading of the new Glenn Highway.

G. SCHOOLS

School overcrowding is a major concern. Of critical importance is the need to plan and construct schools as new development occurs, rather than waiting until existing schools are overcrowded. Funding for school programs and new school construction is also of critical concern.

Based on a projected population of 46,152 in the year 2010, school enrollment has been projected to increase about 74 percent above the 1990 level. This will require the addition of three or four elementary schools, one junior high or two middle schools, and another high school.

H. PROVISION OF OTHER PUBLIC FACILITIES

As the Chugiak-Eagle River area grows, there will be a need to expand other public facilities and services. For example, there will be a the need for additional police, fire personnel and facilities, and health services.

Some services can best be provided on an areawide (entire Municipality) basis, and others on a service level basis (all or part of the Chugiak-Eagle River area.) It is important that the provision of such services be evaluated to ensure that they are provided in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

I. LAND OWNERSHIP/LAND MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS

Several land agreements, primarily among and between the State, the Municipality, Eklutna, Inc. and Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI) have contributed to present land ownership patterns and the management of large, vacant land holdings in the Chugiak-Eagle River area.

These agreements will probably have some impact on future land development. For example, Alaska Railroad holdings in the powder reserve area will need to be taken into consideration in master plan and/or site development designs for adjacent properties.

Should all or part of Fort Richardson or Elmendorf Air Force Base be surplusd in the future, the North Anchorage Land Agreement spells out the disposition of those lands. In addition, certain Mental Health Trust lands may become available for development during the next twenty years.

J. ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Environmental features often influence development. In some areas, natural features, such as topography, wetlands or the presence of bedrock at the surface, may limit development. Such limitations have been incorporated into this Plan through development of the Vacant Land Suitability map.

Environmental features may also have a positive impact on development. For example, open space can be used as a design element to create a strong community focus within residential developments. In this Plan, certain areas with important environmental characteristics are suggested for protection or for retention as parks, greenways and open space.

II. LAND USE PLAN CLASSIFICATIONS

The Recommended Land Use Plan map shows the general location and extent of land uses that will be needed to accommodate and serve a forecasted population of 46,152. The recommended land use plan is not a detailed blueprint for future development, nor is it a zoning map which establishes specific land uses on a lot by lot basis. Instead, it should be used as a guide for making land use decisions. It should also be updated periodically.

Some projected land uses shown on the Recommended Land Use Plan map already exist, while others will develop as the population grows and as needs of the area change. This land use plan is more than a picture of existing uses and the consequences of projected growth. In addition to considering present growth patterns, it also makes recommendations for the future location of the various land uses.

Land uses have been generalized into several different classifications. These are Residential, Commercial, Commercial Recreation, Industrial, Mixed Use, Transportation-Related, Public Lands and Institutions, Parks, Environmentally Sensitive Lands, and Not Designated. (In addition, one area has been classified as Residential/Park.) AMC 21.05 will be revised, concurrent with the adoption of this Plan, to reflect these land use classifications.

A. RESIDENTIAL

This classification refers to areas substantially developed for residential purposes and expected to remain residential for the duration of this Comprehensive Plan. It also refers to vacant lands best suited for residential development. (See Recommended Residential Density map.)

During the next twenty years, large areas of Chugiak-Eagle River will remain in large lot, single family residential use. This type of development results from a combination of preferred lifestyles, a lack of public infrastructure, remoteness and environmental constraints. The areas expected to develop with large lot subdivisions include Birchwood, Eklutna, South Fork and portions of Chugiak, Peters Creek and Eagle River Valley.

More dense residential development, including multi-family housing, is designated for areas with public sewer and public (or certified) water service, and areas where public sewer and water is expected to be extended during the next twenty years. These areas include the center of Eagle River, portions of Eagle River Valley, the old powder reserve, the area between the new and the old Glenn Highways from North to South Birchwood, and the westernmost portion of South Fork. Development in these areas is intended to remain relatively compact to enable the efficient provision of public infrastructure.

With population growth, a need for more multi-family housing is anticipated in Chugiak-Eagle River. Multi-family housing should be developed in areas with public water and sewer which are near employment centers and recreational opportunities, and which have convenient access to major transportation corridors.

It was assumed that the ratio of multi-family to single-family housing would be 15 percent to 85 percent. It was also assumed that additional multi-family housing would be built within sewerage areas presently zoned for multi-family, and within newly sewerage areas.

If all areas designated for the extension of public sewer are developed, it is expected that there will be a need to increase the capacity of the sewage treatment plant at Eagle River from its current capacity of 2.5 million gallons per day (MGD) during the life of this Plan.

As the Chugiak-Eagle River area grows, higher density residential development will take place next to older, established, low-density neighborhoods. Transition buffering or screening shall be utilized in new development between rural and urban density residential areas, and between residential and non-residential areas.

B. COMMERCIAL

This classification applies to areas which are substantially developed for commercial purposes and which are expected to remain in commercial use for the duration of the Comprehensive Plan. It also applies to vacant lands which are best suited for commercial development.

The land use map does not show all locations suitable for neighborhood commercial use. Such locations shall be determined through zoning map amendments in accordance with policies for those areas set out in this Plan (see Guidelines for Growth chapter.) Other factors will include the character of surrounding land uses, the availability of public infrastructure, environmental considerations and the statement of intent for the applicable use district.

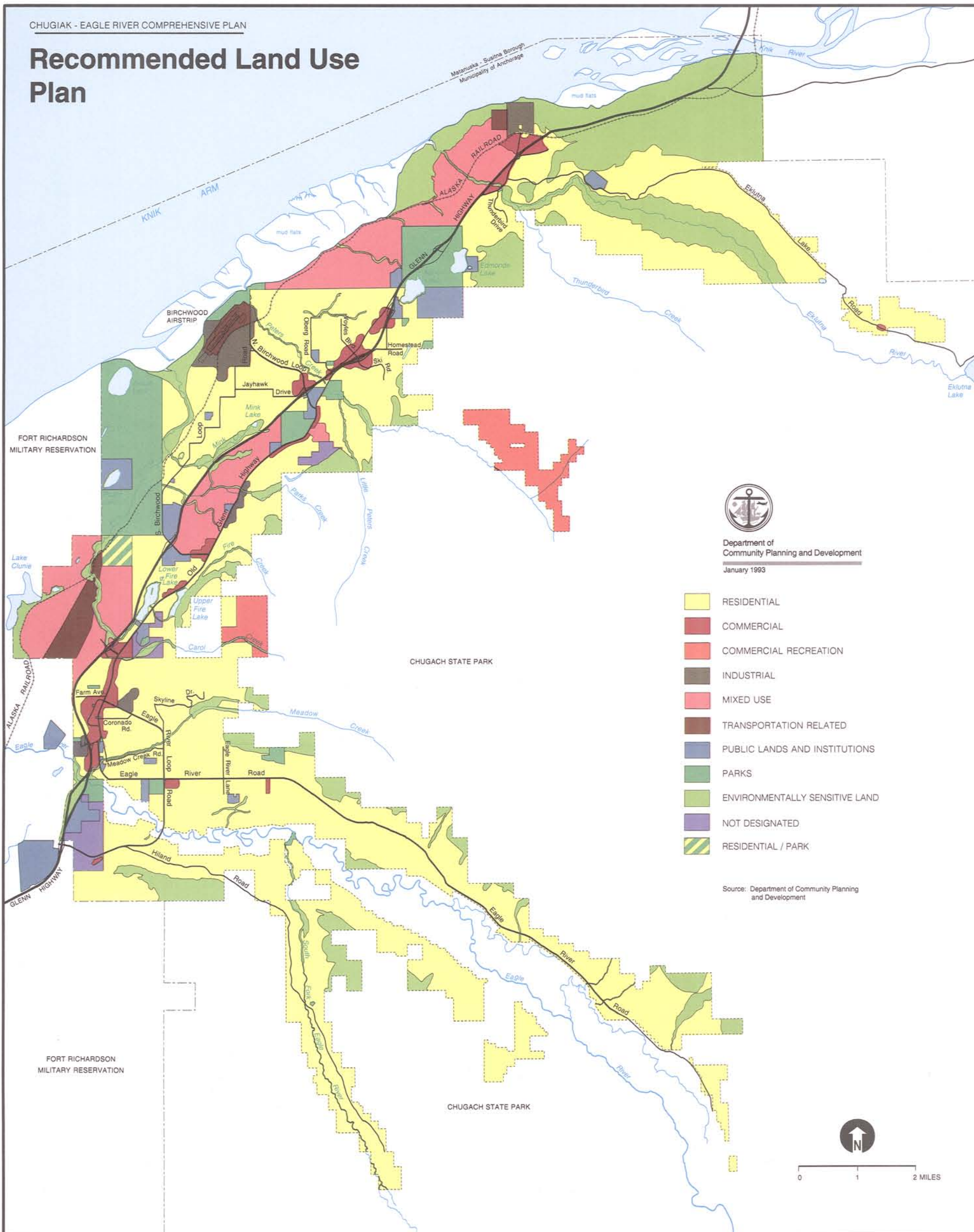
It is the policy of this Plan to concentrate commercial development at strategic locations, rather than allowing them to expand along major arterials. Thus, commercial designations are clustered at nodes in Eklutna, Peters Creek, North Birchwood, at the old Glenn Highway in Chugiak, South Birchwood, Eagle River, South Fork, and at the intersection of Eagle River Road and Eagle River Loop Road.

The commercial area in Chugiak along the Old Glenn Highway from the old center of Chugiak to the North Birchwood interchange is so designated for highway frontage only.

A major concentration of commercial use is designated in central Eagle River, anchored by development at the North Eagle River interchange and the Eagle River interchange. It is the policy of this Plan that downtown Eagle River be retained as the major commercial center for the Chugiak-Eagle River area. Commercial development in the downtown Eagle River business district will be expanded and encouraged to develop.

Most existing commercial development in Chugiak-Eagle River is oriented to local-serving needs. This Plan assumes that this will continue to be the case in the future, although it does not preclude regional-serving commercial development. The Plan also suggests an increase in commercial recreation opportunities.

Recommended Land Use Plan



Department of
Community Planning and Development
January 1993

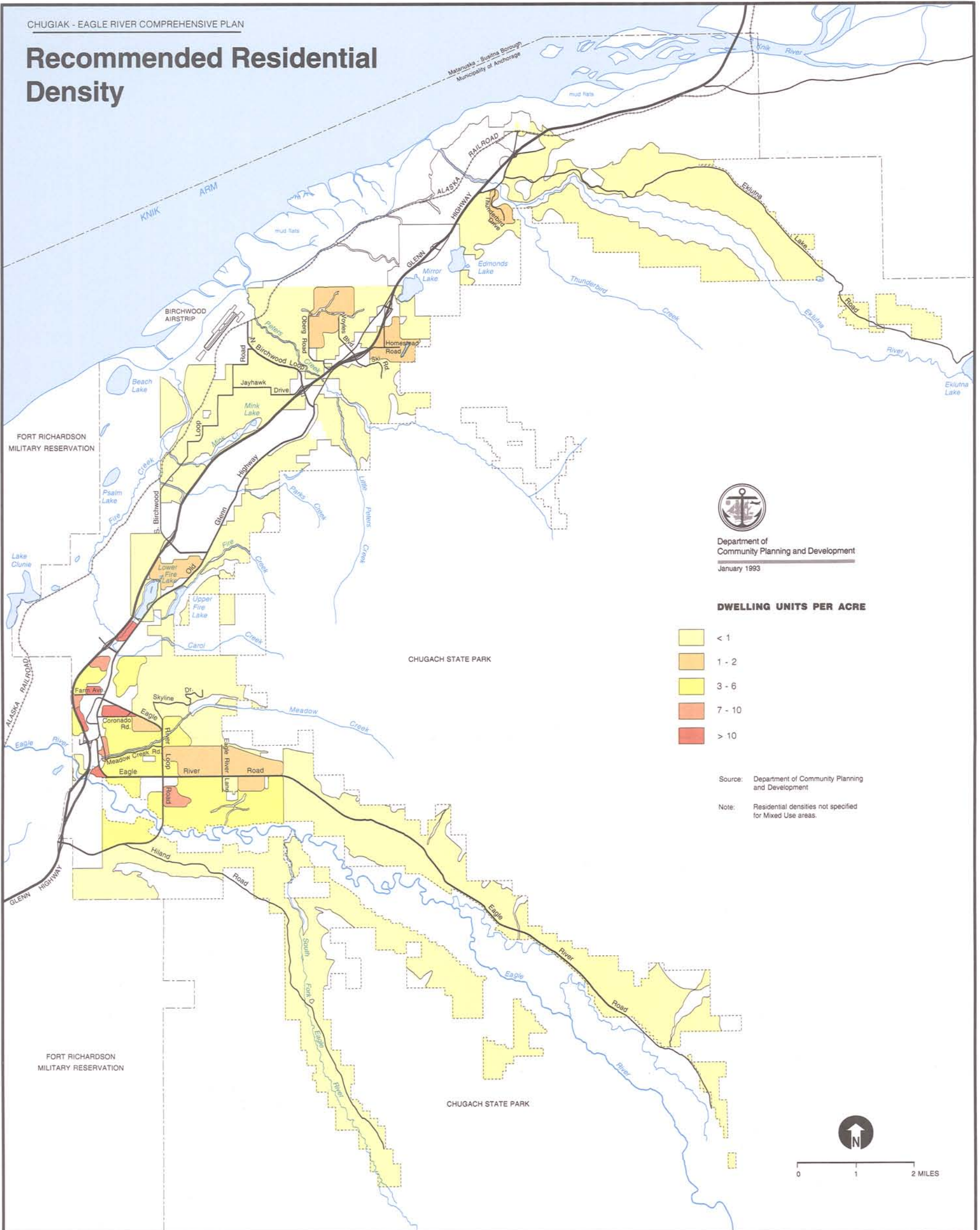
- RESIDENTIAL
- COMMERCIAL
- COMMERCIAL RECREATION
- INDUSTRIAL
- MIXED USE
- TRANSPORTATION RELATED
- PUBLIC LANDS AND INSTITUTIONS
- PARKS
- ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LAND
- NOT DESIGNATED
- RESIDENTIAL / PARK

Source: Department of Community Planning and Development



0 1 2 MILES

Recommended Residential Density



Department of
Community Planning and Development
January 1993



0 1 2 MILES

C. COMMERCIAL RECREATION

This classification applies to areas that have or may have a primary or secondary relationship to a recreation resource. Commercial recreation, including ecotourism, may be developed by either profit or non-profit entities.

The Chugiak-Eagle River area is blessed with an abundance of natural resources which have a potential for economic development. The sports fishery now developing on Eagle River is a significant example.

Two areas, both inholdings in Chugach State Park, are designated for commercial recreation in the recommended land use plan. Another area with potential for commercial recreation is the private holding at the confluence of the South Fork and Eagle Rivers where ski resort proposals have been made in the past. Other types of winter recreation activities have also been proposed elsewhere in Chugiak-Eagle River.

D. INDUSTRIAL

This classification is for areas already substantially developed for industrial purposes and expected to remain industrial for the duration of the Plan. It also applies to vacant areas which are best suited to industrial development. Because the Recommended Land Use Plan map is generalized, it does not show all locations for small, light industrial use.

Development criteria for industrial sites shall depend upon the character of surrounding land uses, the availability of public services and facilities, environmental considerations and any applicable performance standards.

It is important to discourage non-industrial uses within designated industrial areas in order to ensure a continued supply of industrial land.

Major designated industrial areas are located around the Birchwood airport, along the old Glenn Highway in Chugiak, at Springbrook Drive in Eagle River, and at West Artillery Road in Eagle River.

E. MIXED USE

This classification is for those areas intended to have a mix of residential, commercial, institutional, open space, or light industrial uses. A mixed use designation on the map does not prescribe particular proportions for each of these uses, but rather indicates that some amount of each use may be present in the area. A mixed use area shall contain a mix of uses.

The mixed use classification is intended to be used in those areas where development is expected to occur and where public infrastructure is planned during the life of the Plan, and where

a well-designed mix of uses with significant functional interrelationship is the highest and best use of the land. For example, in these areas commercial uses could be planned for ground floor development, with residential uses above. It is the policy of this Plan that a mixed use designated area be implemented through a Planned Community District or through an alternative zoning package, but not with the Transition zoning district.

F. TRANSPORTATION-RELATED

This classification applies to areas with existing or planned public facilities which are directly related to transportation by rail, air or water. The two areas so designated in this Plan are the Birchwood airport and Alaska Railroad holdings in the old powder reserve.

G. PUBLIC LANDS AND INSTITUTIONS

This classification is for areas substantially developed for active public and institutional use, and for vacant areas designated for future public and institutional use.

Smaller existing institutional uses, such as churches and utility substations, are not shown on the Recommended Land Use Plan map because it is a generalized map and because the areas occupied by these uses are too small. However, larger public and institutional uses are shown, as also are selected school sites. Other school sites have been suggested, but none have as yet been approved.

It is important that as development is anticipated, areas for public uses are identified and acquired to meet future community needs.

H. PARKS

This classification refers to areas presently used as or intended for public parks, open space parks and recreational facilities.

Major greenway corridors are located in the "Eagle River, Chugiak, and Eklutna Trails System" in the Anchorage Trails Plan and the Anchorage Park, Greenbelt and Recreation Facility Plan, Volume 2: Eagle River-Chugiak-Eklutna, both of which were approved by the Assembly in 1985. Detailed studies necessary to determine greenway locations and update the previous Trails Plan should be undertaken. Some preliminary work has already begun on this effort.

As this is a generalized plan, parks smaller than five acres have not been designated on the Recommended Land Use Plan map. However, they are still needed for park use. Future park size will be dictated by the demands of park users, terrain, land availability and land ownership, and will not be restricted as to size.

The Location and Number of Five-Acre Neighborhood Parks Needed map shows the areas that presently need, or will need, neighborhood and community parks. Park land has already been acquired in some of these areas, but parks have not yet been developed.

I. ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LAND

Environmentally sensitive land includes saltwater marshes, critical wildlife habitat, freshwater marshes, wetlands, floodplains, unstable soils, historical and archaeological sites, tidal creeks and flats, and lands where slopes exceeds 45 percent. This classification includes areas on the Vacant Land Suitability map shown as "unsuitable."

Development on environmentally sensitive lands shall be limited to open space or passive recreational uses, provided that floodplain and wetland areas may be developed at low rural residential densities or in cluster development patterns which place improvements on suitable land. Such development shall be subject to a site analysis which examines soils, foundation conditions, slope and hydrology. For wetland areas, a study of measures necessary to maintain or restore the original hydrologic cycle shall be undertaken.

In steeply sloping areas, development shall be consistent with constraints imposed by glaciation, erosion, slope stability, avalanche outfall chutes, watershed protection and soil percolation. Privately owned land in these areas is designated for residential use at densities in accordance with the standards of the R-10 district.

Lands within the coastal zone are addressed in the Coastal Zone Management Program. Implementation measures include documents such as the Anchorage Wetlands Management Plan.

As the Recommended Land Use Plan map is generalized, not all streams and waterbodies are shown. However, all streams shall have a 25-foot setback easement from each bank.

J. NOT DESIGNATED

This classification is for those public lands where development may be appropriate but which, because of their location, absence of public facilities, or lack of specific information, make near-term development subject to a need for further study.

Land in this classification can be developed at any time if supported by studies demonstrating the capacity of the land to accommodate the proposed use, including necessary infrastructure. It must also be demonstrated that the proposed use will have no significant adverse effects on surrounding neighborhoods or on the long-term development of the entire area.