

# 4

## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

Four priorities, expressed and widely endorsed in community meetings, have influenced the development of this Master Plan:

### QUALITY OF LIFE

Residents of Girdwood Valley are determined that the high quality of life experienced in their neighborhoods today should not be degraded by growth or by the increased traffic associated with growth. As the Valley develops, it will be important that adequate services and infrastructure are provided to maintain and enhance the quality of life, that all improvements reflect the needs of locals as well as visitors, and that all developments - commercial as well as

residential - preserve the sense of connection to the natural environment.

### ENVIRONMENT

Clean air, ambient quiet, dark skies, unsullied scenery, abundant wildlife and rich natural vegetation are valued highly by Valley residents, as well as by Anchorage residents and visitors from around the world. A key consideration in developing this plan has been identifying the impacts that different transportation alternatives, circulation systems, and scenarios for commercial development would have on these valued resources. The proposed transportation program is designed to help protect and foster these resources. The commercial area



*Fig. 4-1  
Moose Meadows with  
the Chugach Range  
beyond.*

recommendations emphasize small scale, protection of sensitive resources, ecologically based solutions to hazard mitigation, and comprehensive integration of natural open space.

## COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The *Girdwood Area Plan* calls for preserving Girdwood's small-town atmosphere. Girdwood will experience residential growth because highway improvements have effectively made it closer to Anchorage and to the employment centers that are locating in South Anchorage. Girdwood is also destined to experience increased tourism. The aspirations articulated in the *Girdwood Area Plan* focus on small-town character and include perpetuating the predominance of low-density single-family housing, providing some multi-family housing around the resorts and commercial areas, and expanding the town core as a commercial and community center.

## STRATEGIC TOURISM

There is a general community consensus that a well-designed program of outdoor recreation (e.g., golf, alpine skiing, Nordic skiing, bicycling, camping, hiking) and other eco-tourism activities (e.g., birding, wildlife viewing, environmental education) should become the foundation of tourism in Girdwood Valley. These activities have less impact on natural resources and

Fig. 4-2  
Welcome to Girdwood  
sign.



wildlife than would full-scale "industrial" (mass-market) tourism development or the build-out of the Valley as a residential suburb. They also tend to be activities that capitalize on the Valley's unique natural resources. This is relevant to master planning of commercial areas and transportation systems in several ways, but has particular implications for the planning and design of roadway and transit systems and the composition and character of retail centers.

## COMPONENTS OF A COMMON VISION FOR GIRDWOOD'S FUTURE

There was a general consensus among workshop participants that the following list accurately represents the community's specific objectives:

- A pedestrian-oriented community, not dominated by automobiles
- A community in a forest – the natural environment prevails
- A community whose identity is the natural environment
- A community with clean air, dark skies, and quiet
- A community with convenient public transit
- A community that relies on a recreation based economy
- An experience that begins at the entrance to the valley
- A balance between resort and community, between locals' needs and guests' needs
- A community with a well defined center at the New Townsite
- A realistic master plan that can be implemented in reasonable phases