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OVERVIEW OF THE COMMERCIAL AREAS MASTER PLAN

The primary impetus for the Commercial Areas Master Plan has been the community's desire to establish a town center and strengthen the retail/commercial sector of Girdwood's economy. Acknowledged problems in the commercial areas include the fragmentation of retail activity among multiple disconnected nodes, the lack of year-round commercial vitality in any node, and the disincentives to further commercial growth in the designated core of the community. The purpose of the Master Plan is twofold: (1) to identify public sector capital improvements that are needed to stimulate commercial activity, and (2) to provide guidelines and realistic incentives for future commercial development so that it is compatible with the aspirations and character of the Girdwood community.

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

The Commercial Areas Master Plan is based on these core concepts:

Pedestrian and Transit Connections

A walkable community. In concert with the Transportation Master Plan, this plan attempts to define more clearly the zones of pedestrian movement and activity and to suggest ways to separate them from vehicular areas. In the New Townsite, specific recommendations are made for an all-weather, year-round network of pedestrian connections, as well as safer ways to link the north and south sides of the highway. Pedestrian connections include connections to existing or future trails, i.e. a connecting walkway to the

Iditarod Trail along Glacier Creek from the north and south sides of the highway, and improvement of the short-cut connecting trail from Lindblad Street to Crow Creek Road.

A central commercial area where cars are subordinate to pedestrians. The plan suggests ways to reduce the negative effects of vehicular traffic, including multiple transportation options to reduce the number of car trips, traffic-calming of the highway that bisects the New Townsite, more alternative linkages between commercial areas, and more convenient and efficient parking.

Mixed Uses and Commercial Growth

Locations for future commercial growth. Within an established framework of connections and public amenities, the plan locates future development pods that can evolve over time as the need for more space is demonstrated. Areas identified for new commercial development would concentrate a mix of commercial, civic and residential uses and would be well connected to existing destinations. In the New Townsite, Hightower is proposed as the focus of "main street" activity and new development both north and south of Alyeska Highway.

Incentives for commercial development. The plan recognizes the different roles of each commercial area and the need to achieve a "critical mass" of people and activities to support them. In response, it proposes more appropriate development standards for small lots, a northward shift of the commercial development parcel in

the Squirrel Cage area so that it is closer to the existing New Townsite, more public investment in pedestrian amenities and public spaces, and improvements in roads and parking. It also identifies improvements that the private sector could make to improve the intensity of activity at the resort base areas and on other privately owned properties in commercial areas.

Improvements in the quality of commercial space. The plan endorses new Title 22 design guidelines for storefronts, signage, lighting, and public spaces. It also mandates a closer relationship between buildings and the street frontage through the use of more uniform setbacks, arcades and on-street parking.

Inclusive housing and mixed uses. The plan supports the concept of integrating residential units with commercial uses so that year-round occupancy can support the commercial enterprises. Likewise, providing space for civic and recreational uses within commercial nodes is an important strategy to increase the level of activity in town centers without overloading a small community with commercial development. The plan identifies possible sites for uses of particular interest to the local community (like a grocery store and recreational facilities).

Places for people to congregate. The plan identifies Town Square Park, Forest Fair Park, and the day lodge at the old resort base as places where improvements could provide flexible public spaces for a variety of planned and spontaneous events.

The natural environment. The plan has respected the community's desire to maintain the natural environment as the primary character-giving element in the commercial areas. Accordingly, strategies are proposed to improve the parks, open space, and trail connections and to keep the entry to town architecturally understated.



*Aerial Photograph of the
New Girdwood Townsite*