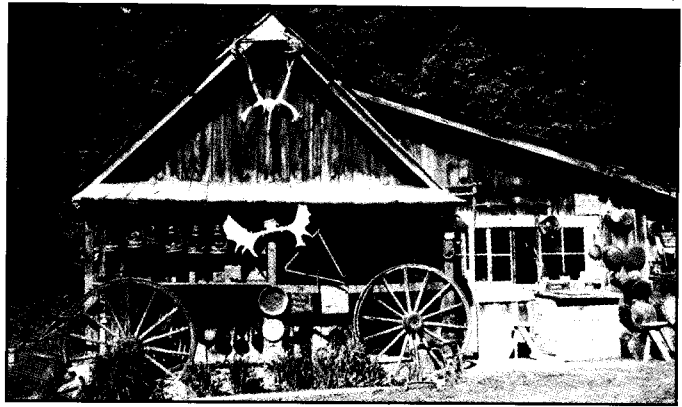


Chapter 7  
*Land Use Plan*



IN THE MID-1950's, THE GIRWOOD VALLEY BEGAN TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF LOCAL SKI ENTHUSIASTS. BEFORE ANY SKI FACILITIES WERE BUILT, SKIERS WERE AIRLIFTED BY HELICOPTER FROM THE VALLEY FLOOR TO THE UPPER SLOPES OF MOUNT ALYESKA, AS SEEN IN THIS 1958 SCENE.



*Crow Creek Mine.*

**D**

uring the past 100 years, Girdwood has experienced a variety of historical episodes that were filled with interesting characters and colorful activities. In the more recent decades, the area has evolved a dual identity as an attractive small town within an hour's drive of Anchorage, and as a recreational visitor destination. This Plan is based upon a continuation of these current trends.

The Girdwood Area Land Use Plan is intended to guide decisions affecting management of lands in the Girdwood valley. The Plan has been developed in coordination with state and federal agencies that maintain management jurisdiction over lands adjoining those under municipal regulatory control.

### *General Land Use Themes*

The Land Use Plan addresses three general themes that are significant to the area. They are:

- the development of new resort/recreational facilities;
- the continued growth of the Girdwood community; and
- the establishment and preservation of a system of open spaces.

These themes are anticipated to dominate the life of the area within the timeframe of this Plan.

#### **RESORT/RECREATIONAL FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT**

Alyeska Resort has brought to Girdwood a major alpine skiing facility for the recreational enjoyment of residents and visitors alike. Although its primary reason for being is recreation, it has also produced local jobs and income for the community. To a certain degree, this has given Girdwood an independent economic base, with the resort facilities providing indirect benefits to other sectors of the local economy.

The Glacier-Winner Creek area in the upper valley has the potential for expanding the resort/recreational base of the local economy, while simultaneously providing new recreational opportunities in the area. The mountain massif located between Glacier and Winner Creeks

has the potential for an additional downhill ski facility. The mountain could possibly hold a ski area with year-round glacier skiing. The skiable area has more than a 5,000-foot vertical drop, and a capacity for about 12,000 skiers (approximately 3 times the current capacity of Mount Alyeska).

Besides downhill skiing, there are other recreational opportunities in the valley that could be created, with visitor support services coming from resort base area facilities. In particular are summer season activities, such as golf, tennis, hiking, mountain biking, gold-panning and many others.

In addition to recreation, destination resorts can also attract other activities that can be a benefit and enjoyment to the community. Four-season mountain resorts are typically becoming the site of music, art and film festivals, as well as education and business seminars. These activities can vary in size and scope from local and regional to national and international.

The successful visitor destination is one that recognizes that quality is more important than quantity. This is particularly the case with Girdwood. The Girdwood valley is not large, being only six miles in length. The Girdwood community will be sharing the valley with the resort/recreational areas. Consequently, there will be limits to how far each can grow without placing detrimental effects on the other.

The establishment of year-round destination resort/recreational facilities in the Girdwood area can be part of a larger local and regional strategy to create a more independent and diversified economy. It can also bring additional social and recreational benefits to the area as well.

#### **COMMUNITY GROWTH**

The community of Girdwood and Alyeska Resort have a symbiotic relationship based upon their immediate proximity to one another. The resort provides a source of livelihood and recreation for the community, while the community provides a labor force and needed facilities and services to the resort.

Although the two are separated by 40 miles of winding roadway along Turnagain Arm, Girdwood has a similar relationship with Anchorage. Anchorage provides a source of livelihood for the approximately one third of the local residents who commute daily to Anchorage for work. Residents also rely on Anchorage for such basic public services as secondary education and health care, as well as retail goods and services.

Girdwood, in turn, provides a major recreational resource for Anchorage residents, many of whom have built second homes in the community. Girdwood also provides a market for a small portion of Anchorage's labor force, which is anticipated to expand with further resort development. More importantly, however, Girdwood is likely to become a more attractive location to reside for residents of the Anchorage area.

One of the critically important factors in Girdwood's attraction for both local residents and non-residents alike is the small-town atmosphere. There are a number of ways to define small-town atmosphere. However, in relation to physical form and land use planning, it is generally meant to be lower intensity of uses and lower scale of structures than are typically found in urban settings. Relative to Girdwood, it also includes slower paced pedestrian and vehicular movement that is free of congestion and pollution. Additionally, it includes social and economic diversity without a large degree of stratification.

The policies and guidelines contained in this Plan are intended to provide a framework for growth that will retain small town characteristics that are important to the community. However, in doing so, the Plan also reflects the continued relationships the Girdwood community will have with the Anchorage metropolitan area, as well as with the nearby resort area.

### **OPEN SPACE SYSTEM**

During the early part of this century, much of Crow Creek valley was washed downstream by hydraulic mining. The Girdwood area was stripped of its evergreen forest to produce railroad ties and to support mining activities. Today, the forests have recovered and cover over most of the scars left by earlier activities.

The area's economy and lifestyle have also changed from the extraction of natural resources to tourism and recreation. As a result, the best economic use of the area's natural resources are to preserve them for their recreational, scenic and wildlife values.

For the destination visitor, authenticity and uniqueness are particularly important features of an area. The quality of recreational and resort base facilities are important features. The draw to out-of-state visitors, however, will be the setting and its natural features, moreso than the facilities. Scenery and wildlife viewing, ecotourism and recreation all require the protection of the valley and surrounding area's valuable natural open spaces.

Natural open spaces are also very important for the residents of Girdwood. They are part of what makes the community livable and attractive. As beautiful as many of the valley's natural features are, they can also be difficult or hazardous to development.

An open space system is a critical component of Girdwood's Land Use Plan. The Plan recognizes the dual functions that open spaces can perform for the community – to provide a physical form to the pattern of development, and to provide space for active and passive recreation.

In a mountain valley the size of Girdwood's, the attractions of the area must be integrated and relate well with the basic fabric of the community and resort areas. The valley's natural open spaces are key to that integration. For residents and visitors alike, the quality of place is linked to how well the important natural features of the area are preserved.

## *Land Use Plan*

The Land Use Plan is intended to guide the physical development of the Girdwood area. The Plan was prepared utilizing the following process:

- Land Demand. Projections of employment, population, and housing were converted to residential and commercial land demand.

- Land Allocation Sequence. Land uses were allocated in the following sequence:
  - a. open space (important natural features, environmentally sensitive and hazardous-areas),
  - b. region-serving employment areas (resort base areas),
  - c. residential areas,
  - d. local-serving commercial and industrial areas,
  - e. public-Institutional areas (parks, community and transportation facilities).
  
- Major Siting Criteria. Several factors were taken into consideration in determining the spatial pattern of development. Significant criteria included:
  - a. development suitability,
  - b. proximity of existing utility infrastructure (water and sewer),
  - c. vehicular and pedestrian circulation,
  - d. use compatibility, and
  - e. public review and response to a series of land use plan alternatives.

The following Land Use Plan consists of a series of land use classifications, a description of the location and intended application, and a Plan Map. The Plan Map graphically portrays the placement of land uses that are intended to create Girdwood's development pattern throughout the timeframe of the Plan.

#### **LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS**

The land use classifications used in this Plan are defined below. Some of the definitions are identical or similar to definitions for classes of use found in other municipal regulatory and policy documents. Other definitions have been modified exclusively for this Plan in order to better address the circumstances unique to the area. In addition, two new land use classifications have been added.

Single-family Residential - This classification is for areas substantially developed for single-family residential purposes and are expected to remain so for the duration of the Plan, and for vacant areas best suited for single-family residential use.

Multi-family Residential - This classification is for areas substantially developed for multi-family purposes and are expected to remain so for the duration of the Plan, and for vacant areas best suited for multi-family residential use.

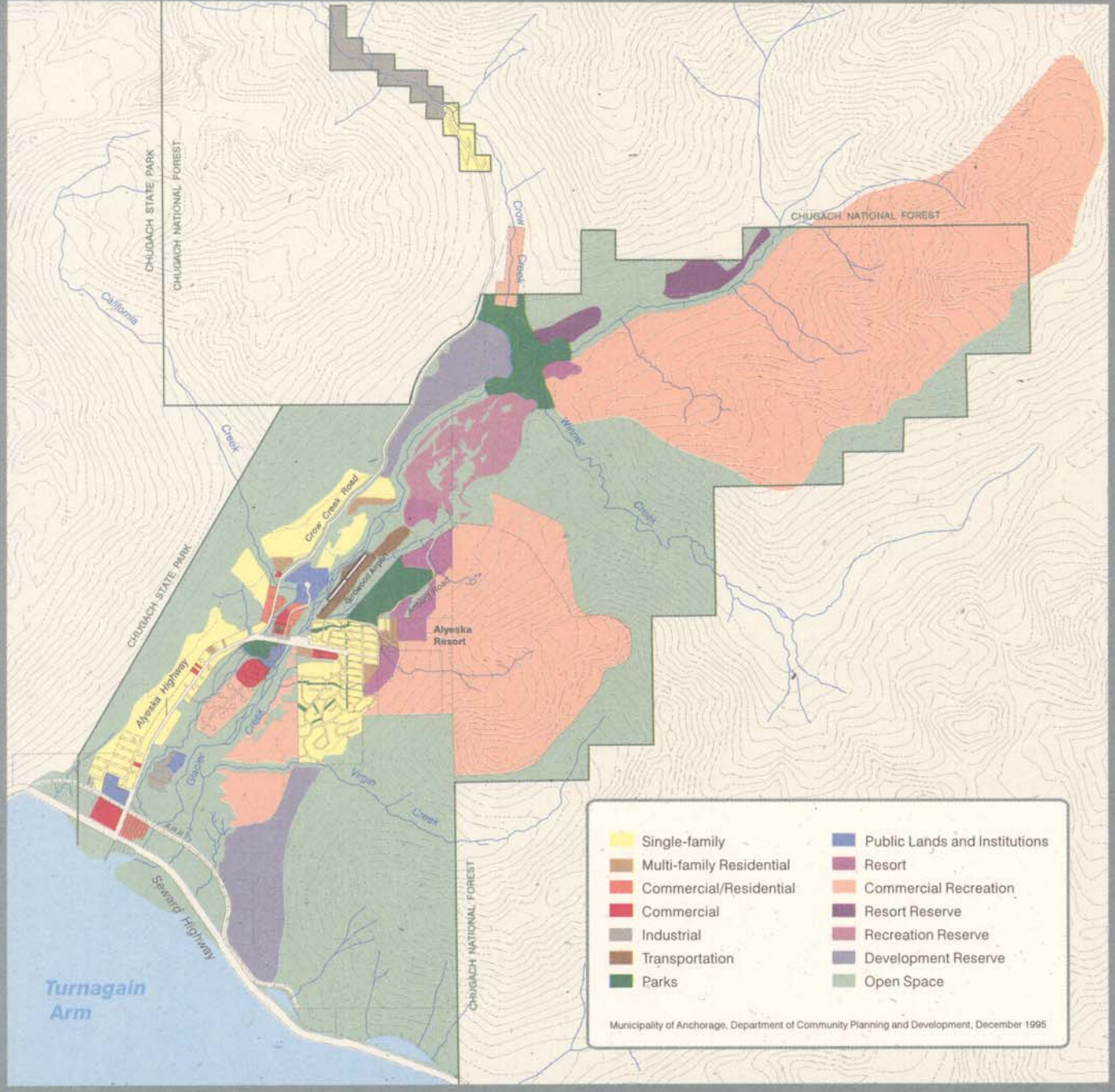
Commercial/Residential - This classification is for areas substantially developed with a mix of commercial and residential uses and are expected to remain so for the duration of the Plan, and for vacant areas best suited to a mix of commercial/ residential uses.

Commercial - This classification is for areas substantially developed for commercial purposes and are expected to remain so for the duration of the Plan, and for vacant areas best suited to commercial development.

Industrial - This classification is for areas substantially developed for industrial purposes and are expected to remain so for the duration of the Plan, and for vacant areas best suited to industrial development.

Transportation - This classification is for areas substantially developed or specifically reserved for transportation purposes and are expected to remain so for the duration of the Plan.

# Land Use Plan

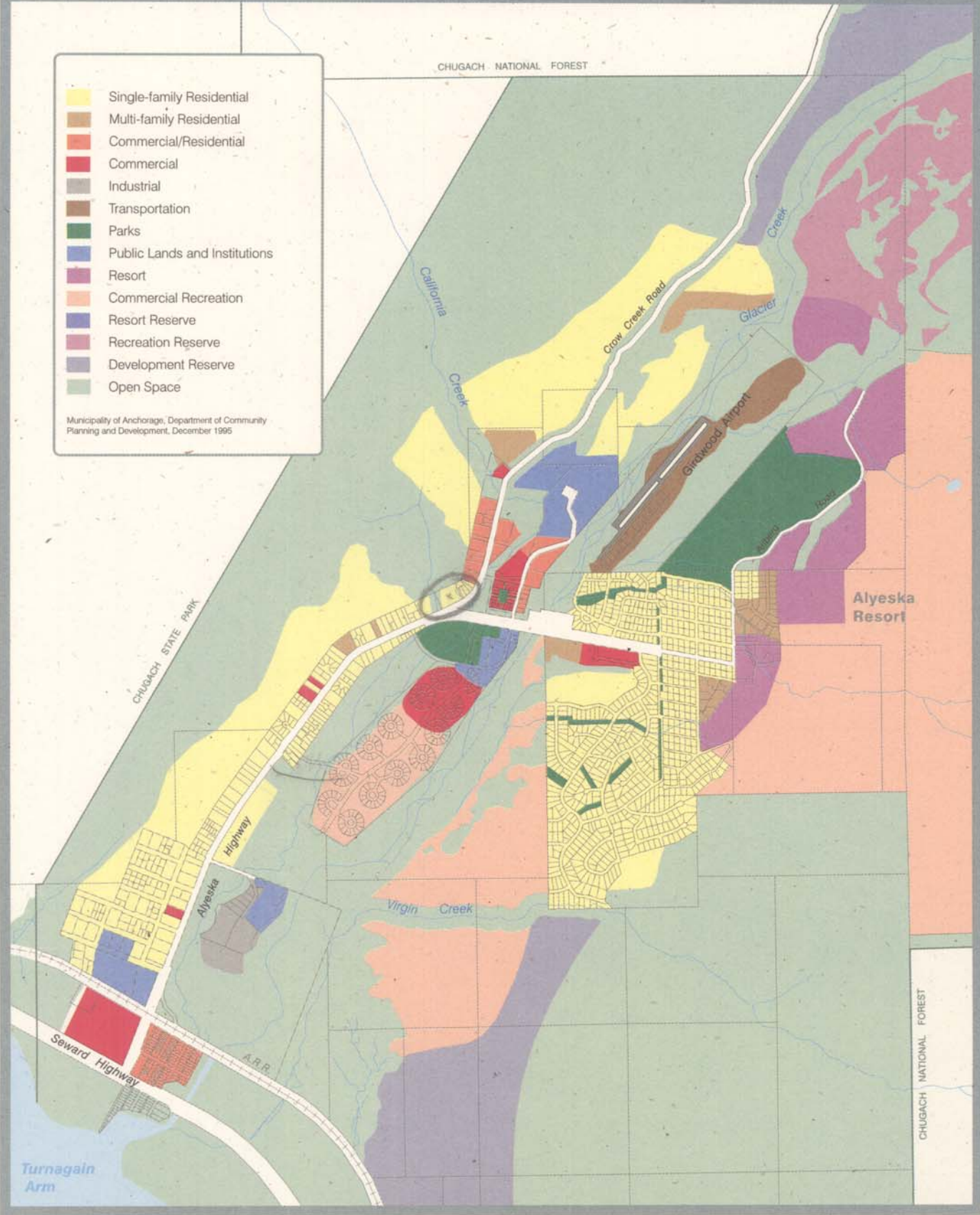


# Land Use Plan (Lower Valley Enlargement)



	Single-family Residential
	Multi-family Residential
	Commercial/Residential
	Commercial
	Industrial
	Transportation
	Parks
	Public Lands and Institutions
	Resort
	Commercial Recreation
	Resort Reserve
	Recreation Reserve
	Development Reserve
	Open Space

Municipality of Anchorage, Department of Community Planning and Development, December 1995



Public Lands and Institutions - This classification is for areas substantially developed for active public and institutional purposes and are expected to remain so for the duration of this Plan, and for vacant areas best suited for such use.

Parks - This classification is for areas substantially developed with park/recreational facilities and/or areas that are specifically reserved or dedicated for such purposes and are expected to remain so for the duration of this Plan. This classification is also intended for areas with natural features that have special significance in the valley.

Commercial Recreation - This classification is for areas substantially developed with recreational facilities for which there is a fee or charge for use and are expected to remain so for the duration of this Plan, and for vacant areas best suited for commercial recreational development.

Resort - This classification is for areas that are substantially developed with facilities and services that have a primary relationship to a major commercial recreational resource and that are expected to remain so for the duration of this Plan, and vacant areas that are best suited for resort use.

Resort Reserve - This classification is for areas that are suitable for base facilities and services that have a primary relationship to a major commercial recreational resource, but which are not anticipated to be developed during the near or intermediate timeframe covered by this Plan.

Recreation Reserve - This classification is for an area that is suitable for multi-purpose recreational use, but which is not anticipated to have any major recreational facilities development during the near or intermediate timeframe covered by the Plan.

Development Reserve - This classification is for areas that are generally suitable for development, but whose location and absence of public facilities and lack of projected demand make near- and intermediate-term development inappropriate and unnecessary.

Open Space - This classification is for areas with environmental characteristics or functions that should be protected, areas which are physically unsuitable or unsafe for development, and areas which have high recreational and/or scenic/wildlife habitat values.

## **DESCRIPTIONS AND APPLICATIONS**

The overall land use pattern for the Girdwood area generally has community development most concentrated on the west side of the valley, and resort/recreational development oriented more toward the east side. Aside from the potential for new resort and commercial recreational development occurring in the Glacier-Winner Creek area, development would be contained in the lower half of the valley. Supporting infrastructure is located here and can be more easily expanded to serve new development.

### **Residential**

Single-family residential development areas are designated where it currently exists, as well as on vacant land west of Alyeska Highway and both sides of the lower portion of Crow Creek Road. Multi-family development areas are also designated where it already exists. Additional areas are located in the northwestern portion of Alyeska Basin Subdivision, and two other areas along Crow Creek Road. One area is north of California Creek just off Crow Creek Road; the other is near the intersection of Crow Creek Road with the proposed Arlberg

Road Connector roadway, which would access the resort base area just across Glacier Creek. The Plan also allows for multi-family housing in the areas classified commercial/residential, commercial, commercial recreation, and resort.

The Plan recognizes a need for a variety of housing types to meet the demands of an expanding resort community. Included here are provisions to address anticipated housing demands. They are guided by the goal of facilitating new development in keeping with the retention of the small town character of the community, and development of an expanded mountain resort destination area.

One of the most critical land use issues for Girdwood is where and how new housing (in particular, multi-family) will be provided. There are two general policies that underlie the residential component of the Plan. First, new resort-based multi-family housing should be concentrated within the designated resort areas. This type of housing will likely be oriented toward the second home owner and/or resort employees. The vast majority of current multi-family units near Alyeska Resort are second homes, thus reflecting this policy.

Second, community-based multi-family housing should be dispersed and kept low scale in order to blend in with the small town atmosphere of the community, rather than resemble that of a more urban setting. This type of housing is intended to be affordable and to be available for both seasonal and full-time residents of the community.

Aside from single-family housing, community-based affordable housing can range from an attached or detached rental unit with a single-family dwelling (accessory unit), small-scale structures housing 2-4 units, to larger-scale structures housing from 10-20 units. The ability of multi-family housing to blend in with the community will be based upon where it is sited, and how well it is designed for continuity, scale, and compatibility with surrounding uses.

The provision for accessory units is a key component of the housing strategy for Girdwood. Accessory units are typically defined as separate self-contained dwelling units that are incorporated within and subordinate in size, location, and appearance to a single-family residence. An accessory unit frequently has its own outside entrance and always has a separate kitchen and bathroom. Accessory units are sometimes referred to as in-law apartments or graany flats. In some communities, accessory units are also defined as a separate structure from the single-family residence, but still subordinate to it. An example of this would be a small living unit over a garage or stable.

Studies have shown that accessory units typically rent for less-than-average market levels. Accessory units do not require development of new land, do not require much construction and cost about one-third as much to build as conventional rental units. In addition to providing opportunities for affordable housing, accessory units can provide homeowners with income, security, and companionship.

Development standards for accessory units typically include limits on:

- size
- front or street-side entrances
- number of occupants
- number of off-street parking spaces.

Some communities also have a dispersion provision so accessory units do not become too concentrated in an area. Limits or exclusion of accessory units can also be done by geographic area. They could be prohibited from some areas, while allowed in others.

In order for accessory units to be allowed in Girdwood, new regulations will need to be established. The intent of the development standards is to assure that accessory units do not increase the intensity of activity or effect on a single-family neighborhood beyond that which would already be allowed under the regulations for single-family development.

Housing as a primary use is intended to be allowed in areas classified for residential and residential/commercial use. Housing may also be allowed as a secondary use in the commercial, resort and commercial recreation areas. Housing is to be prohibited elsewhere.

Guidelines for new housing types and densities are summarized in Table 9, Housing Densities and Residential Development Guidelines.

**Table 9**  
**Housing Densities and Residential Development Guidelines**

Land Use Classification	Housing Type	Density (dwelling units per acre) <sup>①</sup>	Comments
Residential: Single-family	Single-family (attached and detached)	2-4	Duplexes are permitted if in compliance with lot and design standards; <sup>②</sup> an accessory dwelling unit is allowed with single-family dwelling per design standards <sup>③</sup>
(for lots fronting Alyeska Highway west of Glacier Creek)	(Single-family Duplex Multi-family)	(2-8)	(5-8 dwellings per acre density, or triplexes or greater structures require conditional use) <sup>④</sup>
Residential: Multi-family	Duplex Multi-family	5-20	5-10 units per acre require administrative site plan review; <sup>⑤</sup> 10-20 units per acre require conditional use
Commercial/Residential	Single-family Duplex Multi-family	5-20	5-10 units per acre require administrative site plan review; <sup>⑤</sup> 10-20 units per acre require conditional use
Commercial	Single-family Duplex Multi-family	2-20	Residential units only allowed as secondary use, and must be located above first floor level, with a maximum of two stories
Resort	Multi-family	No maximum	Requires master plan approval through conditional use process; also must address seasonal/transient employee housing
Commercial Recreation	Single-family Duplex Multi-family	No maximum	Residential units only allowed as secondary use; requires master plan approval through conditional use process

<sup>①</sup> For lots already platted, only the area within the lot lines is usable in calculating densities.  
<sup>②</sup> Duplexes are allowed only in accordance with Section 4.2.1.2. and Figure 3.1 of the Turnagain Arm Comprehensive Plan until new land use regulations are adopted which specifically address them.  
<sup>③</sup> Accessory dwelling units are not permitted until new land use regulations are adopted which contain specific allowances for them.  
<sup>④</sup> Allowance of conditional uses for housing development at 5-8 dwelling units per acre, or triplexes or greater structures on lots fronting the Alyeska Highway west of Glacier Creek will not become effective until new design guidelines and development standards are adopted.  
<sup>⑤</sup> Conditional use approval is required in lieu of administrative site plan review until new regulations are adopted which include new design and development guidelines and standards.

**Commercial/Residential and Commercial**

Areas designated for commercial use are primarily intended to provide trade and services for local residents as well as for visitors. Although it is anticipated that most major purchases made by local residents will continue to occur in Anchorage, there will be an increasing threshold of feasibility for new and more diversified trade and service providers as the area's population and visitorship increases.

One of the main concerns with commercial development in Girdwood centers on the Alyeska Highway corridor. This corridor is the gateway to the valley, and as such is the most visible element in the community. Interest and concern has been raised over whether or not any additional commercial development should be allowed to occur along this highway.

Once started, commercial development along Alyeska Highway would be very difficult to limit or control. Businesses would continue to find it attractive for the exposure provided by its location. As such, it could take away from the viability of the more concentrated commercial areas to become fully developed. The result would lead to commercial development being scattered throughout the community.

The impact of additional commercial development along Alyeska Highway would not only affect the community character as a whole, but would also affect the many residences that are already located along the highway. In addition, use of the adjoining pedestrian pathway would become more hazardous with increasing auto-turning movements that commercial development would bring.

The Alyeska Highway will continue to function for many years as the only link between the Seward Highway and the valley. Traffic will increase with the growth of the community and resort development. Consequently, care should be taken not to create any unnecessary traffic congestion that strip commercial development could bring.

The intent of this Plan is to prohibit any further commercial uses from locating along the Alyeska Highway other than where designated on the Land Use Plan Map. Ultimately, if commercial development is ever needed or desired along the highway, the only place where it may possibly be accommodated with reduced impacts on the existing residences and traffic flow would be the area on the east side of the highway from Ruane Road northward for a distance of approximately 1,000 feet.

Instead of strip development along the Alyeska Highway, the Plan recommends three general areas where commercial development can be more concentrated. Each area provides a range of advantages that will adequately accommodate the anticipated types of commercial development that may be attracted to Girdwood. By concentrating development at key locations, the commercial establishments can also complement one another. In addition, it can reduce the length and number of trips for residents and visitors who need to make multiple stops.

One commercial area is located at the entrance to the valley, centering on the intersection of Seward and Alyeska Highways. A second area focuses on the new townsite area and includes a portion of lower Crow Creek Road. A third commercial area is located at the intersection of Alyeska Highway and Timberline Drive in Alyeska Basin Subdivision.

#### *Valley Entrance*

The old townsite area is classified residential/commercial in keeping with the current mix of uses. New development will require additional public facilities and consolidation of lots that were created with the original platting of the site. However, over time the area will undergo new development and redevelopment. Its location is suitable for capturing the highway traveler-oriented market, as well as local residents.

The commercially designated area across the highway from the old townsite is currently a vacant wetland area, with slightly more than one acre of upland area near the railroad line. This area shares many similar locational attributes with the old townsite area.

Use of this area, however, will have to be handled carefully, both from an environmental and community aesthetics perspective. Development of this area will require a wetland permit from the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, which will likely require mitigation for any wetland loss.

An important use for a portion of this area will also be for transportation use. Regularly scheduled rail service may likely occur sometime during the timeframe of this Plan. The site could also be utilized as a park-and-ride lot for commuters traveling between Girdwood and Anchorage, and for visitors to the resort base areas in the valley. Therefore, any commercial use of this site should consist of complementary uses to any transportation facilities located there in the future.

Because of its high visibility at the entrance to the valley and its location along the Seward Highway scenic corridor, as well as the need to coordinate uses with a future transportation facility, development of the 24-acre site across Alyeska Highway from the old townsite should not be piecemeal. Instead, it should be done as part of a master plan in accordance with established design standards.

#### *Central Community Core*

A second commercial area focuses on the new townsite area on both sides of Alyeska Highway, and the lower portion of Crow Creek Road. This area is most centrally located to the community. It is intended to contain a mix of commercial, institutional, and residential development in a more compact arrangement where the various uses and activities can complement one another.

The Crow Creek Road commercial/residential area is partially developed at the present time. With the exception of the commercial boarding house on the north side of the creek, commercial development along the roadway is to be limited to the area south of California Creek. The creek and roadway greenbelt will form a natural barrier separating the commercial strip from the residential area further north along the roadway.

The commercial and commercial/residential portions of the townsite area north of Alyeska Highway are also partially developed with commercial and residential uses. The Plan calls for the area on the east and north sides to be commercial/residential in order to allow a continued mix of use. The residential use, however, should be limited to multi-family development. Such use can be more compatible and supportive of the commercial area, while the commercial development provides employment and easy convenience to multi-family residents. The nearby school and playgrounds are also conveniently located supporting facilities.

The commercially designated area is limited in size and should be reserved exclusively for commercial use, particularly, the first-floor occupancy. Consequently, the Plan recommends that any new residential use in the commercial areas be limited to second and third floor levels.

Future development of the commercial townsite area is constrained by a number of factors that will need to be resolved. They include the creek floodplains, well site reserve for the local water system, lack of adequate parking and limited vehicular access.

The Plan calls for construction of a new road from Crow Creek Road to Hightower Avenue. The new road will provide better access, as well as link the two adjoining commercial areas into a more mutually supporting town core.

The new townsite area lacks adequate parking, which will become exacerbated with future growth. Much of the parking problem revolves around the small lot sizes in the existing platted townsite. Potential solutions center on utilizing the town square park, and/or having a series of small public parking lots located on public land on the north, west, and south sides of the platted block. Since the town square is already dedicated parkland, it may be more feasible to consider a series of three parking lots on the perimeter of the area. Resolution of this issue should be a high priority before any further municipal land sales in this area occur.

Future development north of Lindblad Avenue will require the removal of Glacier Utility's water supply source. The water system is an unregulated, substandard community system serving the townsite area. In the future, it is possible potable water provision for the townsite area will be assimilated into the AWWU service area. If this should occur and the existing well site is released for development, the site could become available for commercial use.

A more significant concern for continuing development in this area is the potential for flooding from both Glacier and California Creeks. Given the commitment of use that has already been made in the area, it will be important to protect existing and future development from flooding. Some form of levee may be needed to protect the area from Glacier Creek. On California Creek, a combination of weir and levee for temporary water impoundment just upstream may suffice. With such a system, floodwaters may be captured and released under controlled conditions in order to avoid flooding portions of the townsite. This Plan does not recommend any specific solution to resolving the flood hazard, but does recommend that it be properly addressed before further development occurs in the floodplain.

Interest has also been expressed in redesigning the new townsite area to relocate California Creek to a more central or prominent location within the commercial area. However, relocation of the creek may prove difficult for reasons just discussed, as well as for its significant use as a salmon-spawning area at its current location. The creek's location between Crow Creek Road and the new townsite area will still allow it to be a focal point for human interest and activity as long as its presence is considered in any future design and development in the immediate area.

The third commercial cornerstone of the community's townsite core area is located on the south side of Alyeska Highway. The 10- to 12-acre area is located between the community's civic core area and a proposed commercial recreational area to the south. Commercial use of this area will complement the current and proposed adjoining land uses.

The commercial area is currently owned by the Municipality and platted in a configuration that is not conducive to its proposed use. The design and development of this site should be master planned as an integrated unit. The design should address the site's compatibility with adjoining uses and greenbelts, as well as the vehicular and pedestrian circulation systems which are recommended for the area.

***Alyeska Basin Commercial Area***

Approximately seven acres is designated for commercial use just south of Alyeska Highway and west of Timberline Drive. The commercial site is part of a larger undeveloped tract of land in Alyeska Basin Subdivision. Outside of the resort areas, this is the only commercial area on the east side of the valley. As such, it is well situated to serve the residents of Alyeska and Alyeska Basin Subdivisions.

Most of the site is an open meadow with a high stand of cottonwood and lower stand of spruce/hemlock bordering the north and south sides, respectively. As such, it offers scenic vistas on three sides with excellent southern exposure. With proper site and building design, to include preservation of the tree stands, the site offers many attributes for a variety of local as well as visitor-serving commercial services.

In consideration of the close proximity and exposure the site has to the adjoining residential neighborhood, commercial uses are limited to overnight lodging and certain specified business, personal and professional services that can function efficiently without generating large volumes of vehicular traffic (as designated in AMC 21.40.130, Residential-Office District).

There are also some existing commercial uses along the Alyeska Highway which have a prior history of use. These enterprises are classified as commercial. With the commercial classification, they will remain conforming uses.

**Industrial**

Industrial uses in the Girdwood area generally fall into two categories. They are mining and industrial storage and repair. Mining is occurring at the end of Crow Creek Road where Girdwood Mining Company operates a placer mine on approximately 140 acres of land. The other form of activity -- storage and repair -- is typically carried out by contractors in the construction trades who use light and heavy equipment and materials.

Recently, the Heritage Land Bank created the Girdwood Industrial Park Subdivision. The purpose of the industrial subdivision is to encourage the removal of industrial activities and storage from the rest of the community, and centralize these functions at this site. There is also room for some limited expansion.

This Plan does not encourage the siting of industrial uses or activities in the Girdwood area unless they can be located in the industrial park. Industrial activities are generally out of character with, and detract from, the small town/resort recreational setting.

**Transportation**

This classification only applies to Girdwood Airport. The airport is owned and operated by the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (ADOT/PF). ADOT/PF requires in its airport leases that all uses be airport related.

**Public Lands and Institutions (PLI)**

This classification applies to all areas currently occupied by an institutional use or user. The Plan recommends adding another 2-3 acres of PLI classified land next to the Girdwood Fire Station, and across Glacier Creek Drive. These additional PLI lands are anticipated to meet current and future needs for public facilities, to include a new library and community center.

## **Park**

This classification applies to all currently dedicated parks and reserves. As new neighborhood and community parks are platted and established, it is recommended that they become dedicated and classified as park. This classification also applies to certain areas with natural features that have special significance in the valley. Two such areas are the Four Corners area and the Moose Meadows.

The Four Corners is a unique scenic area characterized by dense woodlands converging on three creeks - Glacier, Crow, and Winner Creeks - that flow rapidly through deeply incised, rock-walled gorges. The winding gorges, rapids and waterfalls offer the sights and sounds of an untouched wilderness setting. Aside from providing access across Winner Creek for alpine skiing and the potential resort base area nearby, use of the Four Corners should be limited to passive trail-oriented activities.

Also classified as park are two Heritage Land Bank parcels (Parcels 6-012 and 6-013) that comprise a large portion of the Moose Meadows located west of Arlberg Avenue and north of Moose Meadow Park. The Moose Meadows is the largest open patterned-ground wetland complex in the valley. It is highly utilized for recreational purposes, particularly during the winter season. It will eventually require park management.

The Plan recommends that the two HLB parcels be classified and dedicated as park land. Such actions would be in keeping with the 1993 Heritage Land Bank Inventory and the municipal park dedication ordinance.

As other important areas that make up Girdwood's open space system are surveyed and platted for disposal and development of adjoining areas, they should also be added to the park system. In particular are the creek greenbelt systems.

## **Commercial Recreation**

There are four areas classified for Commercial Recreation. Two of them -- the alpine ski area on Mount Alyeska and the Crow Creek Mine -- are currently active commercial recreational areas. Three other areas are proposed for commercial recreational use.

One area is the large mountain massif located between Glacier and Winner Creeks in the upper end of the Girdwood valley. Studies have indicated the area has ideal terrain for alpine skiing. A second area is located in the lower valley, straddling Glacier Creek. Here, the intended uses are a golf course and possibly an RV park/campground.

The third undeveloped area classified Commercial Recreation is located on the northwest side of Mount Alyeska and adjoins the current lease area held by Alyeska Resort. This area consists of 150 acres which may have the potential for additional lift-supported alpine skiing with access from the Alyeska Prince Hotel base area.

Although recreation takes many forms in the Girdwood valley, alpine skiing and golf will provide the major commercial recreational facilities for residents and visitors alike. Consequently, these recreational uses, and the areas intended for their development, are linked closely with the economic base of the community.

### *Alpine Skiing*

The Glacier-Winner Creek mountain massif offers tremendous potential for alpine skiing. The skiable terrain is far in excess of what is currently available on Mount Alyeska, which has been developed close to its maximum extent.

Glacier-Winner Creek offers a wide range of skiable terrain from high alpine to lower elevation forested runs, and from beginner terrain to expert, with a sizable amount of intermediate terrain. The area can offer lift-supported skiing, as well as sno-cat and backcountry guided skiing. All-season skiing is also possible on one of the glaciers.

Summertime use of Glacier-Winner Creek can include hiking and mountain biking, as well as other resort-supported recreation. Development of commercial recreational facilities would complement the existing facilities on Mount Alyeska.

Access and visitor/user support facilities will be provided from the resort-designated area located at the base of the mountain massif or from the lower valley resort bases, or both.

A number of studies have been done to evaluate the potential of the Glacier-Winner Creek mountain massif for alpine and related skiing. The studies have reinforced what local skiers familiar with the area have known; i.e., it has very good potential.

This Plan recommends pursuit of commercial recreational development centering on alpine skiing for the Glacier-Winner Creek area. Attracting development is intended to be done through a formal solicitation process, referred to a RFP process (Request for Proposals). This process will involve the participation of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

Municipal involvement will include participation by the Girdwood Board of Supervisors. The RFP should require an activities plan and contain standards for resort and mountain design, as well as guidelines for recreational development, environmental quality and wildlife protection. Social, environmental and economic impacts should be identified and evaluated before any final decision is made. These requirements should ensure that any development is appropriate and beneficial to the valley.

### *Golf*

Golf is a recreational sport that has grown in popularity worldwide. Where once it was viewed as a more exclusive outdoor sport, golf is now played by a wide variety of people of all ages. A golf course can offer Girdwood many advantages. It is a pleasant and challenging form of outdoor recreation. It can provide economic benefits, both directly and indirectly.

Consideration of a golf course in Girdwood is not a new idea. It was first considered in 1965 during the development of the new townsite plan. In 1986, the Girdwood Board of Supervisors requested the Heritage Land Bank to investigate the possibility of a golf course in Girdwood, citing potential economic benefits and a balancing of seasonal employment fluctuation in the valley.

In response, the Heritage Land Bank contracted with Robert Trent Jones II International, a nationally recognized firm in golf course siting and design, to perform an evaluation of the Girdwood area to determine if there were any sites that would be suitable for an 18-hole golf course.

Two sites were found to be very attractive for a golf course. One site was located in the upper valley a short distance north of the new Alyeska Prince Hotel. The other site was located in the lower valley, straddling both sides of Glacier Creek.

The Heritage Land Bank followed the site selection study with an economic feasibility study, performed by the National Golf Foundation. The study was completed in 1992 and concluded that an 18-hole course could be feasible, with use by both residents of the Anchorage area, as well as by visitors.

Golf courses are viewed as an important recreational component of year-round destination resort areas. Recently constructed resort golf courses have tended to be part of mixed-use developments that include residential development and/or other forms of recreation.

A typical 18-hole golf course with a club house and driving range will generally use 200 acres of land. However, that may vary, depending upon the physical setting and other uses being considered with the course.

Although that may appear to be a large amount of land, most of it is basically open space. Golf courses being built today are designed and constructed to maximize the existing natural features, to retain natural habitat (bird and animal life being an added attraction), and to minimize maintenance (which means using hardy native plant species and minimal site disturbance). Course designers and operators have become much more environmentally conscious than in years past.

Girdwood valley provides an outstanding setting for a golf course, a major factor for attracting visiting players. A course would also create many of the positive benefits mentioned previously. It would provide a major form of summer recreation as a balance to the existing winter recreational orientation. It would help to diversify resort/community employment. It would effectively create an open space area available for summer and winter use. Properly designed and constructed, it would also fit into the natural open space/recreational character of the valley.

This Plan recommends a golf course development be pursued in the lower valley commercial recreation area. The area designated commercial recreation in the lower valley on both sides of Glacier Creek contains approximately 270 acres for a mixed golf course development. This includes space for buffering and the new Girdwood access roadway.

The development should be a full 18-hole course with clubhouse and driving range. Other uses associated with the golf course development may include residential, limited related commercial and/or other recreational activities. Any proposals, whether solicited or unsolicited, should be evaluated against a rigid set of criteria that includes land use compatibility, access, retention/enhancement of natural setting, incorporation of public greenbelt/trail facilities, and protection of important environmental features (particularly water resources). The proposed development review should also weigh all aspects of the project, from design and construction to course operation and maintenance.

***RV Park/Campground***

A portion of the commercial recreation area located south of the commercial area between Glacier and California Creeks has potential to be developed as an RV Park/Campground. Such a facility typically includes utility hook-ups, laundry and shower facilities, sewage dump station, and picnic tables and fire pits. Many popular RV park/campgrounds also offer additional recreational amenities that appeal to all age groups of campers. Nearby commercial areas at the Seward Highway and just north of this area contain retail trade and services establishments for the visitors utilizing the facility.

This facility would be an alternative form of overnight accommodation, as well as recreation for many out-of-state visitors to the area. Many in-state residents could also use it.

Any proposal for an RV Park/Campground should require submittal of a master plan that identifies uses, unit or space lay-out, pedestrian and vehicular circulation system, infrastructure requirements and landscaping. The proposal should also show evidence of economic feasibility, as well as operational management.

RV parks/campgrounds can be an added benefit to a visitor- destination area. However, they must be able to enhance the user's visit, without detracting from the area's appearance.

***Ski Area Expansion on Mount Alyeska***

Alyeska Resort currently leases 1,150 acres, classified as Commercial Recreation, from the State of Alaska on Mount Alyeska. The leased area was formerly a special use permit area when owned and managed by the U.S. Forest Service. In addition to the tram station and mountain restaurants, the leased area is developed with lift-supported alpine ski runs.

This Plan includes an additional 150 acres of land classified Commercial Recreation outside Alyeska Resort's leasehold on Mount Alyeska. The additional Commercial Recreation area is located immediately north of the existing leasehold boundary on the northwest side of the mountain.

The purpose for inclusion of the 150 acres as commercial recreation land is to allow, if feasible, the expansion of additional lift-supported alpine skiing to the north of the existing developed slopes. The area of inclusion may provide more moderate level ski terrain with direct access from the Alyeska Prince Hotel base area.

The classification of the 150 acres as Commercial Recreation includes the following stipulations:

1. The classification shall revert to Open Space if Alyeska Resort does not complete a feasibility and design study within five years after the adoption of the **Girdwood Area Plan**, or if the studies indicate development is not warranted.
2. In conjunction with any future conditional use or land conveyance process leading to construction of a new downhill ski run:
  - a. A buffer will be established between the new ski run and the Winner Creek Trail. The buffer, to the maximum extent possible, will provide visual and sound screening from the Winner Creek Trail. This concern will receive particular attention at the point the Winner Creek Trail crosses the bottom of the avalanche path locally referred to as the "Zug Slide."

- b. The only structures permitted in this area will be towers and terminal typically associated with a chairlift.
- c. All areas disturbed by construction and operation of a downhill ski run will be appropriately revegetated.
- d. The service road to the base of the chairlift will be used solely for the purpose of maintaining and operating this new downhill-ski run.
- e. To the maximum extent possible, the ski out route from the base of the new chairlift to the Alyeska Prince Hotel will follow the alignment of the service road.

**Resort and Resort Reserve**

The Resort classification applies to areas that are intended to be developed with base facilities and services that have a direct relationship to a major commercial recreation resource.

Typically, such facilities include lodging, bars/restaurants, shops, entertainment/ conference centers, and parking facilities.

Resort facilities are intended to attract visitors who are not just passing through the area, but intending to make this area their travel destination. To successfully do so, resorts offer, in conjunction with the major recreational attraction, a variety of facilities and services in a comfortable yet attractive atmosphere.

In addition to Seibu Alaska's Alyeska Resort area, the Plan identifies four additional locations that have site attributes that would make them suitable for new resort facilities. The two sites on the north side of Glacier Creek opposite the commercial recreation area have major constraints related to access and are classified as Resort Reserve. They are not anticipated to be needed during the near and intermediate timeframe of this Plan.

The Resort-designated area located near the confluence of Glacier and Winner Creeks was identified by Sno.engineering, Inc., as the most suitable site to support skiing and other recreational activities in the Glacier-Winner Creek area. This site could offer ski-to and ski-away opportunities in a self-contained resort setting, which in its judgment was the most important factor in the overall marketability of a destination ski and tourism experience.

Due to topographic characteristics, there is a limited amount of suitable land for resort development at that site (approximately 15 acres). If used as a resort base area, it is intended to be a pedestrian area, free of private vehicles.

The remaining Resort-designated areas are located closer to the Girdwood community. One of them is a site approximating 27-30 acres located northeast of the Girdwood Airport. Access is anticipated to come from a road extended from the north end of Arlberg Avenue.

Eventually, a new collector road (identified as the Arlberg-Crow Creek Road connector) would link the resort site to the west side of the valley via a new bridge across Glacier Creek. With the connection to Arlberg Road, this site would be reasonably close to Alyeska Resort's new hotel and tram.

The other Resort-designated areas are lands that make up Alyeska Resort. Alyeska Resort actually has two base areas. One is the original base area which contains most of the mountain lift terminals, Golden Nugget Inn, day lodge, administrative offices and parking facilities. The other base area is about a mile to the north and consists of four separate tracts of land. Sited on the largest and northernmost tract is the new hotel and tram station. They occupy

slightly more than one third of the 31-acre parcel. The adjoining parcel is devoted to parking, and the other two parcels are reserved for additional resort bedroom units, according to an approved master plan. The new resort base area is connected directly to the skiing area by tram and chairlift.

During the course of plan development, much discussion focused on the appropriate location for a resort base to serve the Glacier-Winner Creek recreational area, and to what extent the Glacier-Winner Creek resort area should be allowed to develop. Many concerns centered on the impacts that intensive development at the resort location may have on the adjacent Four Corners area.

While the intent of the Plan is not to impose limits on the range of uses that may be considered at the Glacier-Winner Creek resort area, there is a very clear intent to manage and protect the Four Corners area for its scenic and recreational values. Consequently, the siting, design, and development of resort facilities will have to be done with this in mind.

There are a range of architectural themes and site designs that may be appropriate for this location. The Plan does not favor any particular design theme. However, any resort development proposals that consider uses in the Glacier-Winner Creek resort area must take into consideration the following:

- Traffic into the Four Corners area should be minimized, and preferably restricted to some form of mass transit, such as shuttle bus, or ultimately an automated system.
- Any road into the Four Corners area should be curvilinear and aesthetically designed and landscaped.
- Removal of trees and vegetation should be kept to a minimum.
- Development should be hidden, designed to fit in with the area.
- As much buffer/ open space as possible should be retained between the development and the creeks.

The Plan does not favor one particular resort area over another. The resort areas that are identified provide an acceptable range of alternatives for potential resort developers who may be interested in the Girdwood area. As with consideration of development in the commercial recreation area, any proposal for resort development will have to address the social, environmental, and economic effects such development will have on the community and valley as a whole. Development proposals will be expected to respond to established design and development guidelines and standards identified in a Request for Proposal.

### **Recreation Reserve**

The area classified as Recreation Reserve contains a mixture of spruce/hemlock-forested uplands interlaced with extended, open, wet meadows. Small creeks and natural drainages connect many of the open meadows with Moose Meadow Creek and Glacier Creek. With their location in the center of the valley, the meadows provide very scenic mountain vistas in all directions.

The Recreation Reserve is bordered by Glacier Creek on the west, Winner Creek to the north, and the sloping terrain of Mount Alyeska to the east. The southern boundary is bordered mostly by areas proposed for resort development.

This is one of two areas that was identified by Robert Trent Jones II International as a potential site for a golf course (see page 57). A conceptual layout indicated that an 18-hole course could

be developed with little disturbance of the wetland meadows, and most of the area would remain undisturbed.

A course at this location would present players with a breathtaking setting. However, it would be difficult to develop, and there would be uncertainty as to its success given the short season that would be available at this location. As noted previously, there is also strong local opposition at this time for a golf course in this area.

Currently, the area receives a wide range of recreational use by local residents and visitors. Most use is trail related. Nordic skiers, skijorers, dogmushers, hikers and mountain bikers have established a labyrinth of trails throughout the area. The area continues to receive an increasing number of users.

To date, the multiple recreational use of the area has been accommodated without much problem. However, in future years, the area is likely to experience conflicts among users. Heavy use of the area will also require formal management in order to protect some of the more environmentally fragile areas, especially the meadows where many of the trails are located.

The use of this area for continued outdoor recreation will be an asset to the destination-resort visitor, as well as the local resident. The site would be readily accessible from resort areas located on both the north and south ends.

The continuing use of this area will lead to the need for a management plan. The plan should address current and potential future use of the area, recognizing that the multiple recreational demands placed on the area will require forethought on how to best avoid conflicts. Although formal improvements should be kept to a minimum, some will likely be warranted.

This area is a valuable recreational asset for both community and destination visitor usage. As such, it should be given the thoughtful attention that multiple-use recreation will require.

#### **Development Reserve**

There are two areas classified as Development Reserve. One area is located in the upper valley between Crow Creek Road and Glacier Creek; the other is located in the lower valley between Virgin Creek and the Seward Highway.

These areas have physical characteristics that make them generally suitable for development. However, they are currently located well away from any utility infrastructure that would be needed to effectuate their development. Moreover, there does not appear to be a need for their use during the near and intermediate timeframe covered by the Plan. Consequently, these public lands are put into a development reserve status, to be held for future use.

Although it is not anticipated that these areas will develop within the near future, development may be allowed under the following conditions:

- The **Girdwood Area Plan's** Land Use Plan Map is revised for the affected area from Development Reserve to an active classification. This would allow the community to analyze the overall impacts and benefits of the proposed project.

- A Master Plan is submitted. The Master Plan should identify the intended uses and site layout, and address the social, environmental and economic impacts that development of the area would have on adjoining areas and the community as a whole.

**Open Space**

Open space accounts for the largest amount of classified land area. It is located throughout the valley, taking in several types of land area. It includes wetlands and floodplains, steep slopes and hazardous lands, as well as recommended creek greenbelt areas. These lands should generally be left natural. Notwithstanding transportation and utility placements, the primary use of open space land is recreation. Development should be prohibited except as related to a recreational use and/or if authorized in an approved master plan.