

**Susitna  
(Formerly Y)  
Community  
Comprehensive Plan**



Adopted March 2007

## **Y COMMUNITY COUNCIL AREA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

### **Project Sponsored by**

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Department,  
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Murph O'Brien, Planning Director

With support from The National Park Service

And ongoing support by the Y Community Council and community volunteers

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CODE ORDINANCE

By: Borough Manager  
Introduced: 02/20/07  
Public Hearing: 03/06/07  
Adopted: 03/06/07

MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH  
ORDINANCE SERIAL NO. 07-020

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY AMENDING MSB  
TITLE 15 - PLANNING, TO ADOPT THE Y COMMUNITY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

BE IT ENACTED:

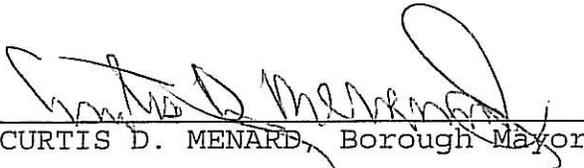
Section 1. Classification. This ordinance is of a general and permanent nature and shall become a part of the Borough Code.

Section 2. Amendment of section. MSB 15.24.030(B) is hereby amended as follows:

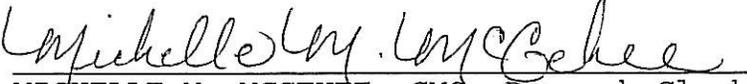
(21) 2005 Y Community Comprehensive Plan, adopted  
March 6, 2007.

Section 3. Effective date. This ordinance shall take effect upon adoption by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly this 6 day of March, 2007.

  
CURTIS D. MENARD, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:

  
MICHELLE M. MCGEHEE, CMC, Borough Clerk (SEAL)

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: Woods, Allen, Church, Kvalheim, and Bettine

(Assemblymember Kluberton was recused from voting.)

## Y COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SUMMARY

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This is the revised draft comprehensive plan for the Y Community Council Area. The YCC Area takes in the public and private land along the Parks Highway north of Willow and south of Talkeetna, extending east from the Susitna River some 20 miles into the Talkeetna Mountains. This includes the Caswell Lakes, Sheep Creek, Montana Creek and Sunshine neighborhoods (see map 1, page 4, Introduction Chapter).



Like the Borough as a whole, the YCC area is experiencing significant growth and change. The total population of the area is currently about 1,000 people. Population doubled between 1990 and 2000, growing at an annual rate of about 8%. The YCC area is likely to experience sustained growth and change, due to continued growth in tourism, growing interest in second homes, pressures for resource development, and commercial and residential growth in the southern Matanuska Susitna Borough. Access improvements will also spur growth including upgrades to the Parks Highway and the proposed Knik Arm ferry and bridge.

The purpose of preparing a comprehensive plan is to help residents, property owners and other members of the community work together to respond to both the challenges and opportunities posed by this growth, and to guide future development in the YCC area to meet community goals.

Alaska Statutes Title 29.40.030 requires the assembly of a second class borough like the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to adopt a comprehensive plan by ordinance. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough assembly adopted a Borough-wide comprehensive plan in 1970. Upon consideration of updating the plan in 1985, the Assembly adopted Resolution 86-7 which instead established a policy of deferring to each Borough community for preparation of its part of the Borough's comprehensive plan. Based on the Assembly's resolution, the Planning Commission established a process for a community to initiate and complete a community plan, which has been followed in the YCC community as described below.

The effectiveness of a plan will ultimately be determined by the extent to which it is used. This document sets out policies that guide use of public and private land, and direct community and agency decisions about improvements to roads, trails and other public services and facilities. The plan establishes strategies for economic development, environmental protection and improved local governance. By design, this is a long term plan; while the plan sets general directions and establishes priorities, additional projects, actions or policies will be needed to reach plan goals.

The key to the success of a community planning process is the degree to which it builds upon the knowledge and the vision of the people who live in and care about the area. The entire process to prepare this plan was organized to bring out and record the common goals of the people of the YCC community. This plan is intended to be "by the people, for the people." Key elements of this public process are summarized below:

January 2003	Request received by the MSB planning division from the Y Community Council for Comprehensive Planning Assistance
April 2003	“Y Gathering” – Community wide visioning weekend, attended by over 130 residents. Number one priority was the need to develop a comprehensive plan.
July 2003	Solicited applications for Planning Team Members
August 2003	Planning Team members (20) appointed by Planning Commission
Sept-Oct	Planning Team met to prepare RFP to solicit contractor to help prepare Comp Plan
Nov 2003	RFP released, 2 proposals received; proposals reviewed, contractor selected
January 2004	Contract Awarded to Agnew::Beck Consulting
Feb 04-Jan 05	Monthly Planning Team meetings held, all publicized & noticed to allow participation by any interested parties
March 2004	Release of “ <i>Draft Issues and Goals Report</i> ”, plus summary flyer (sent to all boxholders and property owners in community)
April 15,17 2004	Community wide Workshop, attended by 100+ community members, to review & refine Issues and Goals
Oct 2004	Release of “ <i>Draft Comp Plan</i> ” (post cards announcing draft plan release and public workshops sent to all boxholders and property owners in community)
Nov 5,6 - 2004	Community wide Workshop, attended by 75+ community members, to review & refine Draft Plan
Dec 6	Deadline for receiving comments on Draft Plan
Jan 2005	Planning Team meeting to discuss proposed revisions to the Draft plan, based on public comments
May 2005	Planning Team public hearing and final meeting to forward revised Draft plan to Community Council
<i>Next Steps....</i>	
Summer 2005	Community Council public meeting and approval of plan, recommendation to forward revised Draft plan to Planning Commission
Summer 2005	Planning Commission public hearing and approval of plan, recommendation to forward revised Draft plan to Assembly (tentative date)
Summer 2005	Assembly public hearing and approval of plan (tentative date)

## Summary of Plan Policies

The overall direction of the plan is to hold onto the characteristics that make the community a special place today, and also to respond to community needs and inevitable growth and change into the future. Key plan policies are summarized below:

### Land Use & Town Center

1. Maintain the community’s rural character:
  - Encourage relatively low densities, about 2 acres per unit in the majority of the “rural residential” areas, with higher densities in the vicinity of the town center
  - Retain open space, protect water quality & habitat, so residents continue to have “out the backdoor access” from residential areas into surrounding natural areas.

- Establish “open space” subdivision incentives, to encourage sub-dividers to set aside some land for open space, trails, water access, etc. in exchange for higher densities
- 2. Protect the scenic quality and environmental quality of land along the Parks Highway and Spur Roads, by encouraging future commercial development to locate in clustered centers, and screening development along the highway. Large scale commercial and heavy industrial uses are discouraged along these highways and in rural residential areas; home-based businesses, small scale residential-compatible commercial, and established commercial businesses are encouraged.
- 3. Create a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use town center, to include places to meet friends and neighbors, venues for events and community meetings, a farmers market, commercial services like a bank, Post Office, grocery, restaurants; provide sufficient utilities to support higher density development.
- 4. Guide location and character of development with significant off-site impacts to minimize impacts on environmental and community quality. In particular, set standards for industrial activities and natural resource development, e.g. coal-bed methane, logging, gravel extraction, etc.
- 5. Establish a set of Land Use Districts that set out encouraged and discouraged uses and development standards in different parts of the YCC area.
- 6. Prepare a Borough-approved Special Land Use District to implement the Comprehensive Plan’s land use recommendations.

## **Recreation & Open Space**

Overall, it is the community’s intent to better manage, rather than actively promote, recreation and tourism activities in the Y area. Particular priorities include:

- Improve management of recreation use at the Montana Creeks confluence Yoder bridge area.
- Take action to reduce growing problems of human waste in un-managed recreation areas, either by reducing use or providing necessary facilities.
- Ensure adequate management resources are available prior to developing new recreation facilities.

Other recreation and open space priorities are listed below:

1. Reserve, protect and expand access to natural features & open space.
  - Retain most remaining state and Borough public lands as open space and other community uses, particularly land near the community’s major streams and rivers; recognizing that in some instances Borough lands will be sold for private use.
  - Retain habitat and environmental quality in the land along streams and rivers, particularly the larger rivers and streams that link the Big Susitna River on the west with the Talkeetna Mountains on the east.
  - Ensure protection of water quality in the upper reaches of stream and river watersheds (mountainous areas east of the settled portions of the Y Community).
  - Establish development guidelines to protect open space values on private land.
2. Meet the needs of diverse recreation uses & users.
  - Manage (but not promote) motorized recreation use; guide this use to locations that minimize adverse impacts on community life.
  - Focus on improvements in recreation opportunities for kids, including neighborhood parks, and safe way to get around the community.

3. Retain, dedicate and improve trails system - identify and protect existing trails, create a master trails plan that provides new linkages between residential areas, commercial areas, open space and recreation sites.
4. Establish system of parks, recreation facilities and open space and “special places”, e.g., the falls on Montana Creek, sport fishing at the junction of the North & Main Forks of the Kashwitna.
5. Create sustainable recreation management practices. Explore the possibility of establishing a system so the community, working with the Borough and State, can create user fees that generate funds to manage local recreation use.

### **Circulation**

1. Plan for future expansion of the residential road system – develop a road system that distinguishes higher volume collectors from residential roads.
  - Existing Roads – 10 roads are identified as priorities for upgrades to better handle existing and anticipated traffic.
  - Future Connections – 5 key connector roads and bridges are identified.
2. Define standards for road development and surfacing. Ensure that as part of future subdivisions, the developer is required to build or upgrade any affected roads to meet Borough standards.
3. Plan for expansion of the Parks Highway, including restricting roadside commercial development. Reserve a route for a bypass in the vicinity of the planned town center, rather than widening the existing highway. Working with the community, pick a specific route that minimizes impacts on the natural environment, existing businesses and landowners.
4. Find solutions to growing safety and congestion problems at key intersections along the Parks Hwy, for example at Montana Creek.
5. Plan for good town center access – roads, parking, trails, transit, signage.
6. Maintain opportunities for transit, including rail and carpools - incorporate options for transit in the future, primarily linked to intensification of development in the Sunshine and Sheep Creek/Caswell Lakes commercial areas, including carpooling lots, and links to future commuter rail.
7. Maintain and improve roadside trails – require a roadside trail route be preserved in association with improved and/or new collector roads.
8. Improve road maintenance.

### **Public Services and Facilities**

1. Improve community services; top priorities include: fire service, land for a cemetery, emergency services, a community center, retaining land for key public facilities, securing a school site in Caswell Lakes, and establishing water spigots in the community.
2. Improve the community’s capacity to pay to develop and operate needed community services and facilities.

### **Economic Development**

The general approach on this topic is to find a balance point between maintaining community character and encouraging opportunities for local residents to make a living in the YCC area. There is particular interest in providing job and business opportunities so as children grow up they have the option to remain in the area. Specific strategies include:

1. Encourage development of a diversified local economy, both seasonal and year-round, that matches community values, including well-managed tourism, locally-produced products, agriculture, local-serving commercial activities, and cottage industry.
2. Protect and maintain outdoor recreation resources (open space, trails, lakes, etc.) as one key element of a sustainable local economy.
3. Strengthen and promote the identity of the Y Community Council Area and its neighborhoods, facilities, services and products.

### **Leadership & Communication Goals**

1. Strengthen the community's control over issues affecting the future of the Y Community Council Area. Establish non-profit status for the community council, and work towards developing an office and a part time, paid staff person.
2. Improve the communication network within the community as well as between the community and outside entities.
3. Through this planning process, narrow priorities to increase odds of success of community projects.

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## INTRODUCTION

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### Purpose of Plan

*“It is the intent of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough government to learn of and respect each community’s desires for its present and future way of life and to insure that these desires become each community’s portion of the Mat-Su Borough Comprehensive Plan.”*

*Assembly Resolution 86-7*

This is the comprehensive plan for the Y Community Council Area. The YCC Area takes in the public and private land along the Parks Highway north of Willow and south of Talkeetna. This includes the Caswell Lakes, Sheep Creek, Montana Creek and Sunshine areas. This Plan was prepared by a local planning team working with a consultant. It has been circulated for public review and comment, with public workshops to review the plan held on November 5 and 6, 2004. Based on public comment, the YCC Area Planning Team will revise the Plan and send it for formal approval to the Y Community Council. Upon Council approval, it will be reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission and finally adopted by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly.

The primary goal of this comprehensive plan is to give the Y Community Council Area more control over its future. The plan is being prepared by the Y Community Council for the benefit of the YCC Area.

*“Somebody is going to make decisions about the future of this community.  
I’d just as soon it was us - the people who live here.”*

Comment at Spring 2004 Comprehensive Plan Workshops

### Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

Comprehensive plans are tools used by communities to guide physical growth and development, to meet social, economic and environmental goals. Nearly all communities in the lower 48, and all larger communities in Alaska, have prepared and continue to update their community comprehensive plans. Talkeetna, Sutton, Wasilla and Palmer are just some of the communities in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough that have created plans, and use them to direct their community's development.

Like a local constitution, comprehensive plans outline a formal set of goals the community has agreed to use to guide future development. Comprehensive plans are flexible, but typically address topics such as Land Use, Recreation, Circulation, Economic Development, Public Services and Governance.

The internet provides extensive resources regarding comprehensive plans, including examples of individual plans and more general information. Several interesting examples are listed below.

History - <http://www.asu.edu/caed/proceedings99/ROUSE/ROUSE.HTM>

Comprehensive Plan elements -

[http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/es/science/landuse/smart\\_growth/](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/es/science/landuse/smart_growth/)

Urban County example - <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/dpz/comprehensiveplan/>

Small Town example - <http://www.myrtle creek-oregon.org/Planning/CompPlan/MCCompPlan.html>

**Support in State and Borough Statutes**

In Alaska, comprehensive plans are mandated of all organized municipalities by Title 29 of the Alaska State Statutes. The key elements of the State statutes are extracted below:

**State Statute Sec. 29.40.030. Comprehensive plan.**

(a) The comprehensive plan is a compilation of policy statements, goals, standards and maps for guiding the physical, social and economic development, both private and public, of the first or second class borough, and may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- (1) statements of policies, goals, and standards;
- (2) a land use plan;
- (3) a community facilities plan;
- (4) a transportation plan; and
- (5) recommendations for implementation of the comprehensive plan.

(b) With the recommendations of the planning commission, the assembly shall adopt by ordinance a comprehensive plan. The assembly shall, after receiving the recommendations of the planning commission, periodically undertake an overall review of the comprehensive plan and update the plan as necessary.

**Titles 15, 17 and 27 of the MSB Code**

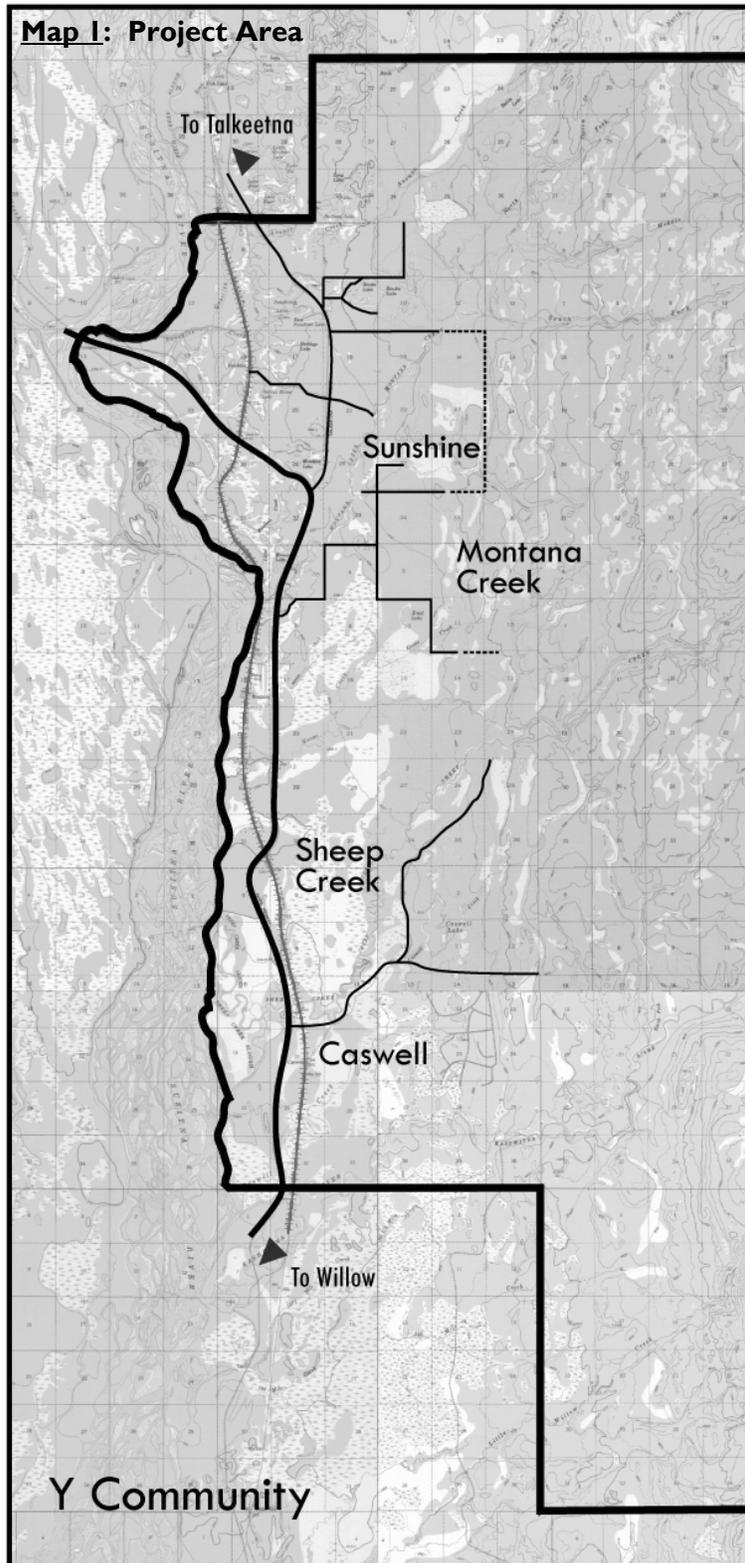
The Borough Assembly has directed the planning commission to prepare comprehensive plans for communities that express a desire to develop such plans. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough sets out rules for planning in Title 15, 17 and in Title 27 of the MSB Code.

Comprehensive plans are useful because they outline a formal set of goals the community has agreed to use to guide future development. The contents of comprehensive plans are flexible, but typically address Land Use, Recreation, Transportation, Economic Development, Environment and Public Services. Even though comprehensive plans usually include recommendations for action, they are not manuals dictating detailed implementation of community goals. In other words, a comprehensive plan is NOT a zoning ordinance, an application for incorporation, or a method for taxation.

<p><b><i>A Comprehensive Plan is:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A general statement of community goals</li> <li>• Long term; looks ahead 10, 20, 30 years</li> <li>• A means to gain local control over changes affecting community life</li> <li>• A means to acquire resources to carry out community priorities (e.g. a reference for grant applications)</li> <li>• The foundation for a range of implementation actions: roads, trails, public facilities, land use policies</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>A Comprehensive Plan is NOT:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A zoning ordinance</li> <li>• An application for incorporation</li> <li>• A method for taxation</li> </ul>
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# INTRODUCTION

## Project Area



### Where is the Y Community Council Area?

The Y Community Council Area (YCC Area) is an area roughly 23 by 27 miles in size, or approximately 400,000 acres, located between the Talkeetna Community Council and the Willow Area Community Organization.

More specifically, the area extends on the north to the Susitna River bridge on the Parks Highway, and up to Mile 5 on the Talkeetna Spur Road. The southern boundary is located at approximately mile 85 of the Parks Highway, where the Parks Highway crosses Caswell Creek. The Big Susitna River is the boundary on the west; the eastern boundary is parallel and east of the Parks Highway roughly 20 miles, in the Talkeetna Mountains.

# INTRODUCTION

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## Process to Prepare the Plan

*“The key to this process is setting aside personal agendas and thinking about what’s best for the whole community”*

In the Spring of 2003, more than 100 people attended the Y Community Gathering - a 2-day event to discuss the future of the Y Community Council Area. They traveled from Caswell, Montana Creek, Sheep Creek, Sunshine and spots throughout the YCC Area. They saw that the population was growing, land uses were diversifying, and ways of life were being impacted. Change was coming to the community, and people felt it was time to discuss what to do about it.

One thing became clear: no matter what shape the future might take, the residents of the YCC Area wanted to take a more active role in guiding the changes in their neighborhoods, their businesses, their lands. At the Gathering, YCC residents identified preparation of a community comprehensive plan as the highest priority for the community. Preparation of a comprehensive plan was seen as the best way to involve the full community in planning for the inevitable changes heading their way.

After the Gathering, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough approved the membership of a Y Community Planning Team to guide the development of a comprehensive plan. The team drafted and released a request for proposals to hire a consultant to assist the community. Agnew::Beck Consulting was hired and began the process during the winter of 2003-2004.

In March, the planning team and Agnew::Beck Consulting released the YCC Area Issues and Goals Report. A brochure summarizing the report was sent out to all box holders and property owners in the Y Community Council Area. Sources for this material include the final report from the 2003 Gathering, personal interviews with YCC residents, meetings with the YCC Planning Team and Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission and statistical analysis of U.S. Census and other background data. The report set the stage for Community Workshops in April.

The April Community Workshops were widely publicized and well attended. Over 100 people attended both the Thursday night and Saturday morning session. Participants



April 2004 Workshop



Planning Team meeting at the Senior Center

reviewed and refined the goals presented in the Issues and Goals Report, which in turn have become the basis for this comprehensive plan.

Between May and October, the Planning Team met once or twice a month (all through the summer!) to prepare and refine the key chapters that make up the comprehensive plan.

The next Community Workshop was held November 5 and 6, 2004 at the Susitna Valley High School. During this workshop, residents of the YCC Area reviewed the Draft Y Community Council Area Comprehensive Plan (see flyer in Appendix A). They also commented on the Draft Plan, suggested changes and voted on which projects were priorities for the community. Priority projects are summarized at the beginning of the Implementation Plan located at the end of this document. In addition to the community input received during the “Draft Plan Review Community Workshop”, additional public comments were collected through a comment form (see Appendix B) after the workshop. All public comments were reviewed and used to revise the comprehensive plan for final review by the YCC Area Planning Team and the Y Community Council. Upon approval by the Y Community Council, the YCC Area Comprehensive Plan was reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission and finally adopted by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly. This comprehensive plan for the YCC Area provides long-term guidelines for shaping the future of the YCC Area. It voices the intent of the YCC Area community and specifically identifies goals, strategies and actions that the community and Borough support. The completion of this document is the result of years of dedicated work by the YCC Area Planning Team, the Borough Planning Team, consultants and residents of the YCC Area.

## Who's Doing the Work?

A number of parties are involved in the process of creating a comprehensive plan. First and foremost are community members, who drive the entire process. Other participants include land and business owners, community councils, state and local governments, and large land owners like native corporations, the University of Alaska and the Alaska Railroad. In the case of the Y Community Council process, specific roles are described below.

The **MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH (MSB)** encourages communities to develop comprehensive plans (Assembly Resolution 86-7; PC Resolution 93-27). MSB helps communities prepare and implement plans by providing technical assistance, background information, staff and/or consultant support, and the opportunity to take part in MSB's annual capital improvements programs.

A **PLANNING TEAM**, made up of interested community members, is appointed by MSB to guide preparation of the comprehensive plan. The planning team recommends approval of the plan to the Community Council. The 23 members of the Y Community Council Planning Team are:

Robert Ambrose, William Bouterse, Richard Burgener, Denise Chappel, Geraldine Denkwalter, Mandy Jo Hartley, Steve Heinrich, Scott Holcomb, Linda Horstmann, Richard Horstmann, Jack Ince, Dave Johnston, Tom Kluberton, Susan Mason-Bouterse, Kandace Moore, Cari Sayre, Anne Skinner, James Skinner, Brandon Stevenson, Don Tanner, Holly Stinson, Herman Thompson, Hans Tobler. Herman and Tom are the committee co-chairs.

The MSB relies on the local **COMMUNITY COUNCIL** to ensure the comprehensive plan reflects community views. The Community Council will review and approve the final plan at a public meeting. One of the main values of adopting a comprehensive plan is to allow the community to speak to the MSB and other interests with a collective voice.

The Community Council approves the comprehensive plan and submits it to the MSB. The **MSB PLANNING COMMISSION** and then the **MSB ASSEMBLY** hold public hearings to review and approve the community's plan. Once adopted, it becomes the official planning document for the community. When necessary, it can be amended or updated through the same process.

The **CONSULTANTS** from Agnew::Beck Consulting provide expertise in the fields of planning and community organizing and helped shepherd the comprehensive plan through the drafting and approval process. Though Agnew::Beck offers assistance to the community, as well as the Planning Team and MSB throughout the project, it is the community that sets the objectives and guides the outcomes.

*“I think change is coming, has already come. We need to plan for the change. Most of us want to keep the same sense of community. Most of us don’t want to tell people what to do on their land, but we also don’t want to have our hands tied when some chemical plant is going in down the road and there’s nothing we can do about it.”*

### **The Comprehensive Plan Process**

The YCC Area Comprehensive Plan anticipated a 12-16 month schedule, broken into 3 distinct phases. Preparation and initial discussions began in January, 2004. Phase 1 of the project included preliminary research and analysis, review of the Gathering Report, resident interviews, public notice development and the creation of the Issues and Goals Report. Phase 1 culminated with the first Community Workshop, held April 15 and 17, 2004. At the end of Phase 1, the goals driving the comprehensive plan were formally articulated.

Phase 2, which encompassed May through November, saw the production of a Draft Community Comprehensive Plan. This draft was reviewed by the community at the second Community Workshop on November 5 and 6, 2004. It contained strategies that accomplished the goals identified in Phase 1 in a manner consistent with community values. The strategies in the Draft Comprehensive Plan were based on the community’s input from the first workshop, work by the Planning Team, consultants’ research and MSB Planning Commission data and analysis.

The final phase of the process was to set priorities to implement the plan. Phase 3 included the delivery of a final comprehensive plan, which the community presented to the Y Community Council Area Planning team, the MSB Planning Commission and the Borough Assembly for approval and official adoption.

## BACKGROUND

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### Community Overview

*“We like the sense of community. When my folks asked me ‘Why do you want to live out there?’ I told them ‘It’s just like the place where I grew up.’ It is kind of rural, but people are helpful, and people are friendly. We finally moved here in ’96 after we retired. So we’re part of the growth that’s happening.”*

### Community Area Boundaries

The Y Community Council Area is an area roughly 23 by 27 miles in size, or approximately 400,000 acres, located between the boundaries of the Talkeetna Community Council and the Willow Area Community Organization. More specifically, the area extends on the north to the Susitna River bridge on the Parks Highway, and up to Mile 5 on the Talkeetna Spur Road. The southern boundary is located at approximately mile 85 of the Parks Highway, where the Parks Highway crosses Caswell Creek. The Big Susitna River is the boundary on the west; the eastern boundary is parallel and east of the Parks Highway roughly 20 miles, in the Talkeetna Mountains.

The Project Area Map at the beginning of this chapter shows the area boundaries.

### Land Ownership

The majority of land in the lower-lying, western portion of the area is privately owned. This includes several large blocks of land held by Cook Inlet Region Incorporated and the University of Alaska, as well as land held by individual private owners. Most land is in larger parcels – 5, 10, 20, 40 acres and larger. Exceptions are several large subdivisions, most with lots of approximately 5 acres. The older subdivision at Caswell Creek has several hundred lots, all smaller than the 1-acre minimum currently permitted for parcels with on-site well and septic systems.

The State of Alaska is the area’s largest landowner, holding the eastern two thirds of the Y Community Council Area. A number of private in-holdings are scattered through this upland area. The State of Alaska also owns some land in the lower, western portion of the area, mostly wetlands passed over by other public and private owners. The MSB has approximately 10,000 acres of land, located in blocks of 80 acres and larger in the western third of the YCC Area. Please see the Land Ownership Map, following.

*“I think the area has really changed a good bit in the last four years. But we kind of brought it on ourselves. We have a sort of informal homeowners association - we got a grant to run electricity to the area and petitioned the Borough for fire service. All of that has made the area real desirable to people, I think. So it’s no wonder that we are seeing growth and change.”*

Comment at the Spring 2004 Comprehensive Plan Workshops

## **Significant Features**

The overall pattern of the landscape of the area is simple. The western third of the area is relatively flat, with large expanses of mixed birch and spruce forests, streams and wetlands. Further east the land rises slowly into the foothills and then the rugged, alpine terrain of the Talkeetna Mountains.

This western, lowland portion of the YCC Area is roughly an equal mix of forests and wetlands. The former areas are generally physically suited for development; the wetland areas are costly to develop, and development in these areas can harm important water quality and habitat values. The maps on the following two pages give a more complete picture of the area. The Topography Map shows the generalized locations of forested lands. The Soils Map presents a general picture of the location of wet soils that present significant limits to development.

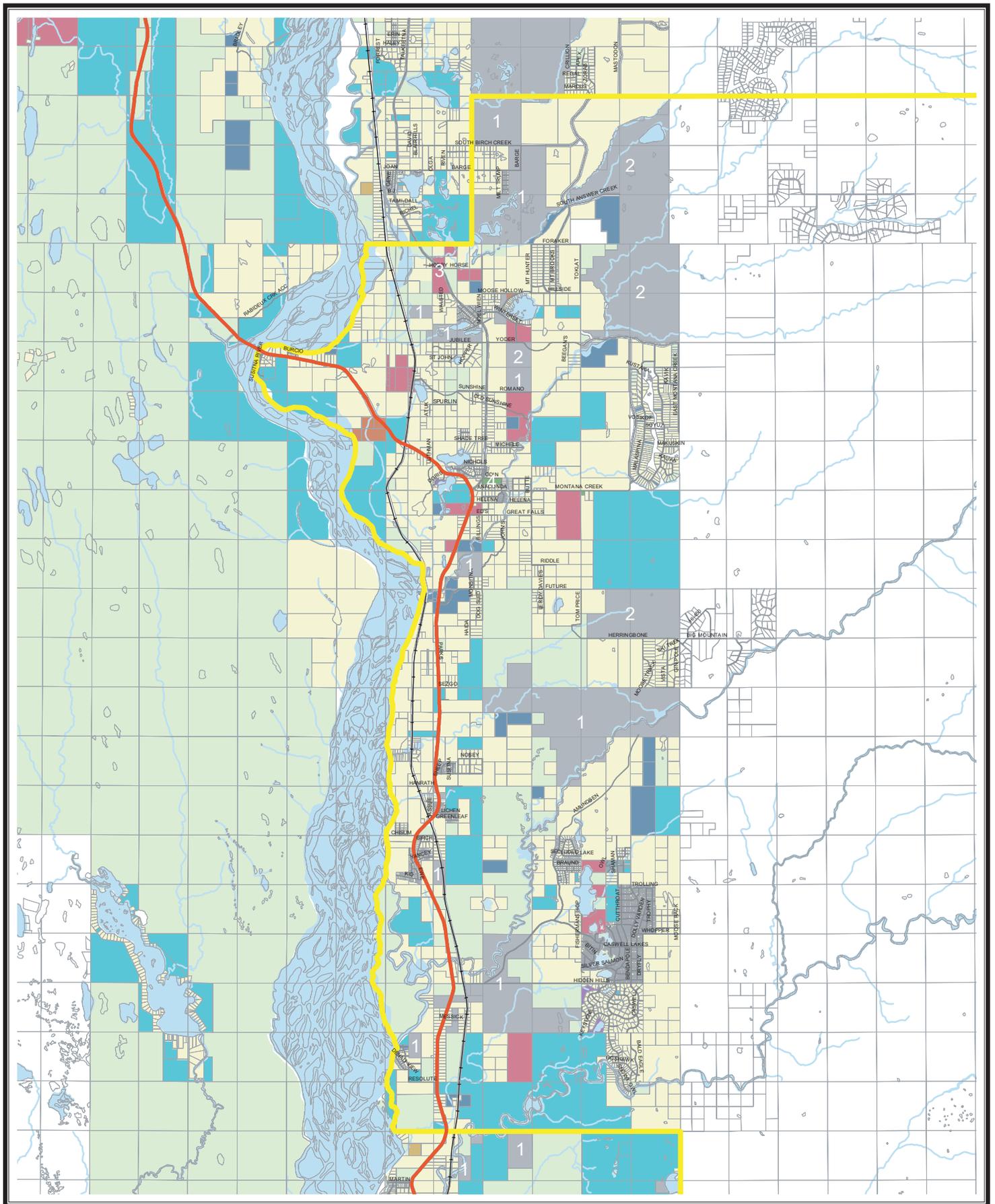
A series of rivers and streams, most of which offer good seasonal fishing, flow through the area down from the Talkeetna Mountains into the Susitna River. The creeks from south to north, (starting below the YCC Area) are Willow Creek, Little Willow Creek, the Kashwitna River, Greys Creek, Caswell Creek, Sheep Creek, Goose Creek, Montana Creek, and Answer Creek.

Wherever there is a rise in the land or an opening in the vegetation, the area offers great views north to Denali and the Alaska Range.

## **Summary of Community Character**

The Y Community Council Area is something of a hidden jewel. People passing through the area on the Parks Highway rarely get a sense of the attractive homes, quiet landscapes, great views, streams and lakes, and neighborly people that make this such a rewarding place to live, make a living or raise a family. The number of full time residents and second homes in the YCC Area is steadily increasing, suggesting that many more people are beginning to appreciate the area’s charms. This reality – the combination of an attractive rural landscape and steady growth - together provide a major motivation for the development of this plan. See Topography and Soil Maps on the following pages.

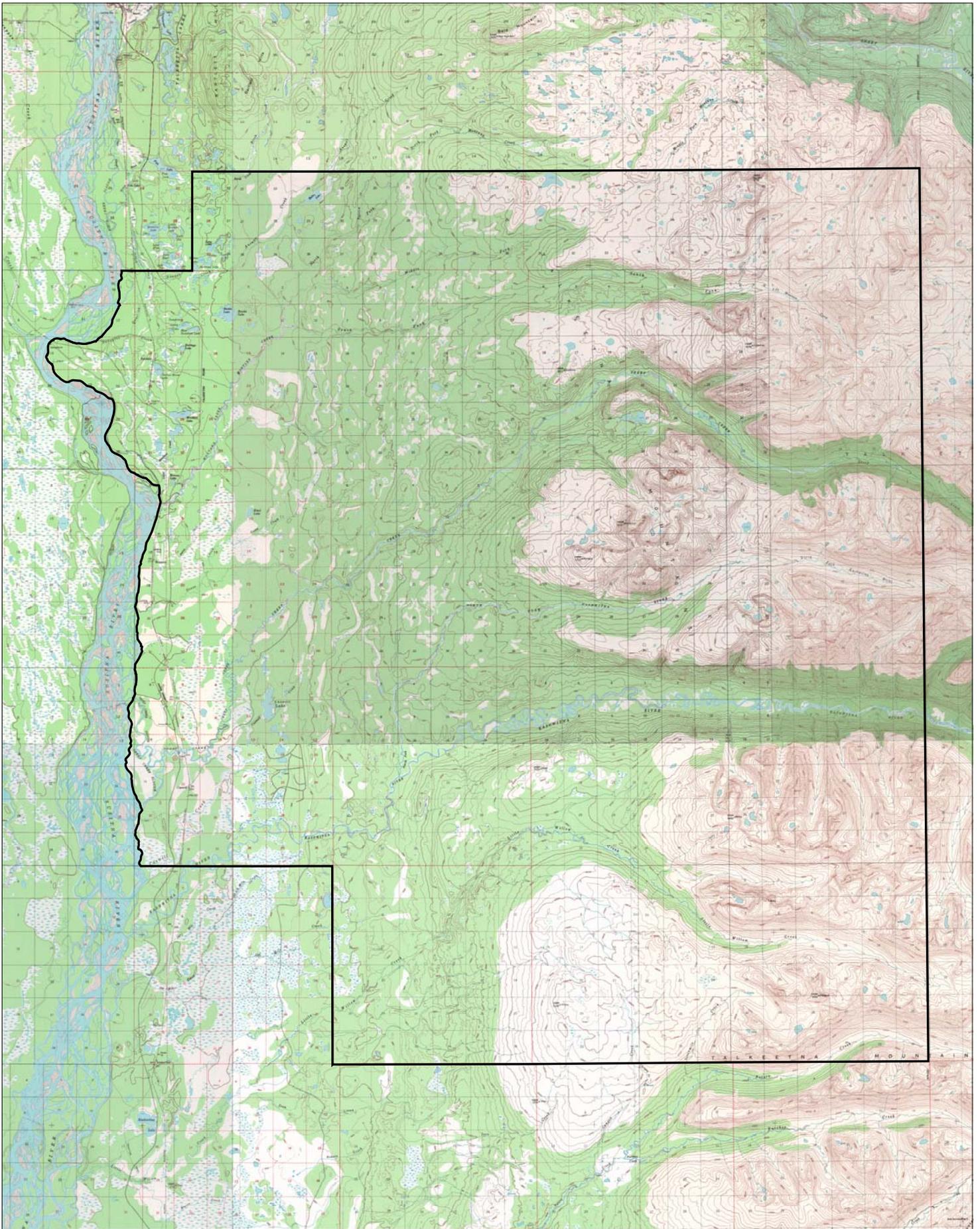




# Land Ownership

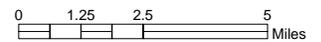
<span style="color: cyan;">■</span> BOROUGH	<span style="color: brown;">■</span> FEDERAL	<span style="color: lightblue;">■</span> NA	<span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> NO TAX ID	<span style="border: 2px solid yellow; display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px;"></span> Community Council Boundary
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> CITY	<span style="color: gold;">■</span> MENTAL HEALTH	<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> PRIVATE	<span style="color: red;">■</span> PUBLIC UNIVERSITY	<span style="color: brown;">- - -</span> Trails
<span style="color: darkblue;">■</span> STATE	<span style="color: gray;">■</span> NATIVE CORP	<span style="color: green;">■</span> COOPERATIVE	<span style="color: purple;">■</span> PUBLIC USE	<span style="color: red;">—</span> Parks Highway

- |                       |                                 |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Native Corporation | Cook Inlet Region, Inc.         |
| 2. Native Corporation | Montana Crk. Native Assn., Inc. |
| 3. Public University  | University of Alaska            |
| 4. Cooperative        | Matanuska Electric Association  |

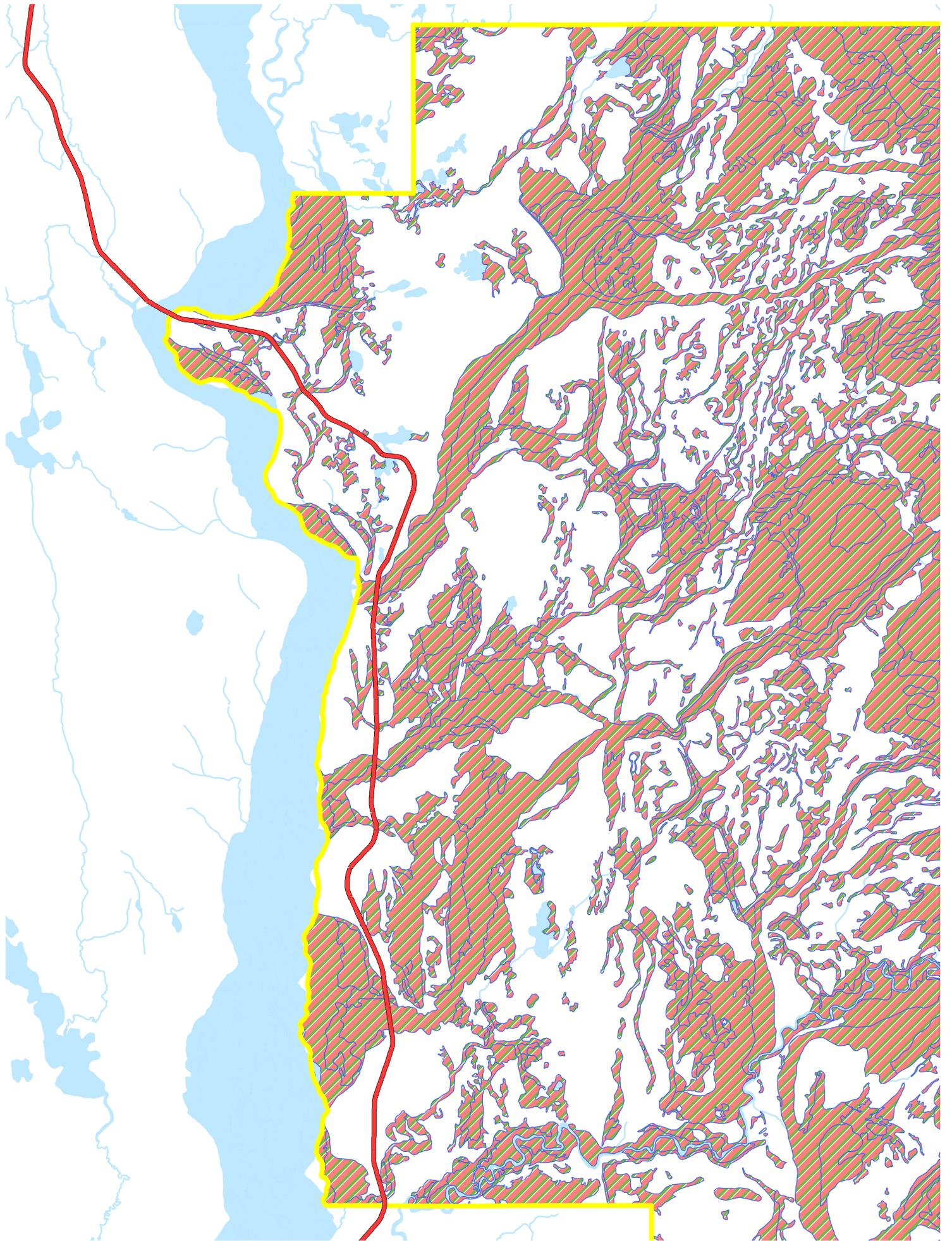


'Y'  
COMMUNITY COUNCIL

 Community Council



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## **BACKGROUND**

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### **Growth Trends**

#### **Summary**

This section presents preliminary information on trends in residential and tourism growth, so residents and businesses can better understand the forces that may affect the YCC Area's future.

Over the last two decades, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough was the fastest growing area in Alaska. In addition to rapid population growth, tourism and amenity-driven residential growth has expanded dramatically, particularly in the north Borough. Visits to Talkeetna, for example, increased from about 30,000 to over 130,000 people annually.

The YCC Area has been on the outer edge of this rapid growth, being located north of the residential and commercial expansion occurring in the Wasilla area, and south of Talkeetna and Denali National and State Parks. Over the next 20 years, while these other areas are expected to continue to grow more rapidly than the YCC Area, the YCC Area will likely face increased pressure for growth and change. Attributes of the community that support this prediction include:

- Location at the edge of the most populous area of Alaska
- Continued improvements to the Parks Highway
- Concentration of public facilities – health clinic, high school, senior center
- Location at what is likely to emerge as the commercial and public services center of the North Matanuska-Susitna Borough
- Convenient location on the main “pipeline” of Alaska package travel, location at the split between road to Talkeetna and Parks Highway
- Growth in South Side Denali National Park, Alaska's best-known attraction
- The possibility the Knik Arm crossing
- Large supply of undeveloped private land
- No controls on the type, amount, character or location of development (today)

#### **The Bottom Line**

Taken together, the evidence of past growth and characteristics listed above suggest that the YCC Area is likely to experience more change in the future. This fact, combined with the uniquely attractive rural character of the area, provide the underlying motivations for preparing this plan.

The remainder of this chapter presents an assessment of growth trends for the Y Community Council Area by Dr. Steve Colt, an economist from the University of Alaska's Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), who is working under contract to Agnew::Beck Consulting. Following Dr. Colt's draft paper is a set of additional statistics related to growth trends.

## Introduction

This section reviews historical data on growth patterns for the Y Community Council Area. This information is combined with regional and statewide economic projections to arrive at plausible growth rates for population and employment in the YCC Area from now until 2010 and from 2010 until 2020.

## Historical Growth

The YCC Area permanent population grew at 7.7% per year between the census years of 1990 and 2000. Of all neighboring communities, only Talkeetna grew faster. Although population figures for more recent years are estimates made by the state demographer, they suggest that the pace of growth may have slowed, to a level less than the recent growth of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Nonetheless, the entire region continues to grow much faster than Anchorage or the entire State of Alaska.

**Table 1: Historical Population Growth**

	1990	2000	2002	average annual growth	
				90-00	00-02
Population (census)					
Y Community	454	956	1,014	7.7%	3.0%
Meadow Lakes	2,374	4,819	5,316	7.3%	5.0%
Houston	697	1,202	1,279	5.6%	3.2%
Talkeetna	250	772	868	11.9%	6.0%
Trapper Creek	296	423	409	3.6%	-1.7%
Willow	932	1,658	1,771	5.9%	3.4%
Mat-Su Borough	39,683	59,322	65,241	4.1%	4.9%
Anchorage Municipality	226,338	260,283	269,070	1.4%	1.7%
Alaska	550,043	626,932	643,786	1.3%	1.3%

Table 2 shows employment growth for the region. Matanuska-Susitna Borough employment surged at four times the statewide rate and increased from 6% of the Anchorage/Matanuska-Susitna labor market to 9%. Since the YCC Area was not a Census-designated place (CDP) there is no trend data for the YCC Area itself.

**Table 2: Historical Employment Growth**

	1990	2000	2002	average annual growth	
				90-00	00-02
Employment					
Wage and salary jobs:					
Mat-Su Borough	7,200	12,900		6.0%	
Anchorage	111,400	134,400		1.9%	
Anchorage + MatSu labor mkt	118,600	147,300		2.2%	
Alaska	236,227	280,664		1.7%	
Alaska total employment (includes proprietors)	268,736	309,091		1.4%	
Mat-Su share of Anc+MatSu jobs	6%	9%			

## Comparison of Y Community Council Area Council to Matanuska-Susitna Borough

In order to make projections of future YCC Area growth, it is helpful to first consider what the 2000 census can tell us about how the Y Community Council Area is similar to or different from the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB). These relationships can be used to link growth in the YCC Area to growth in the Borough. Matanuska-Susitna Borough growth, in turn, is already linked to regional and statewide economic conditions in the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) econometric forecasting model.

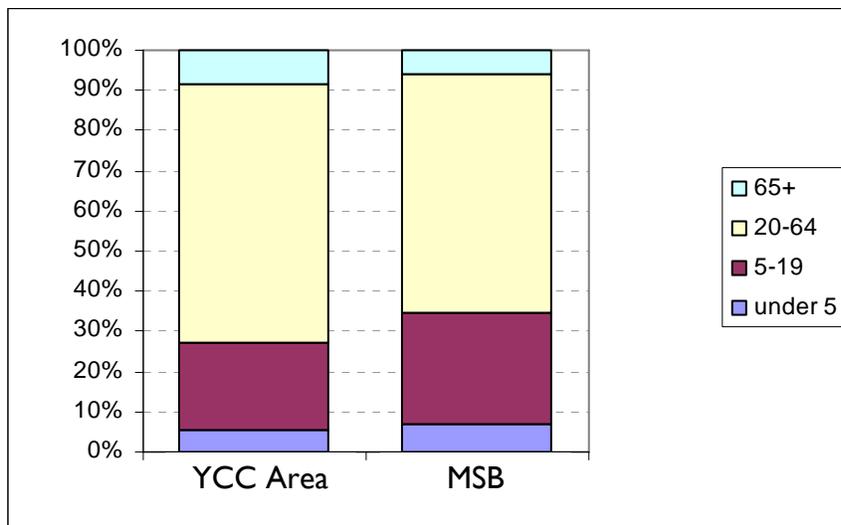
The census tells us, first, that the YCC Area population age structure is significantly older than the MSB population. The median age is 41 in the YCC Area vs. 34 for the Borough. However, the difference stems from fewer children and more working-age adults in the YCC Area, rather than a high number of retirement-age people. This is important information, because it suggests that recent growth is tied to the Alaska economy rather than to the preferences and incomes of retirees.

These trends have implications for the Y Community Council Area.

Barring an unexpected boon, Alaska's economy will likely need serious resuscitation within the next decade. This is significant for the YCC Area because it suggests that pressures for economic activity will intensify in the coming years.

**Table 3: Year 2000 Age Structure Comparison**

Age Structure	Y Community		Mat-Su Borough	
Total Census population, April 1, 2000	956	100%	59,322	100%
under 5 years	51	5%	4,147	7%
5-19 years ("school-age")	211	22%	16,553	28%
20-64 years ("working-age")	613	64%	35,122	59%
65+ ("retirement age")	81	8%	3,500	6%
median age	41		34	

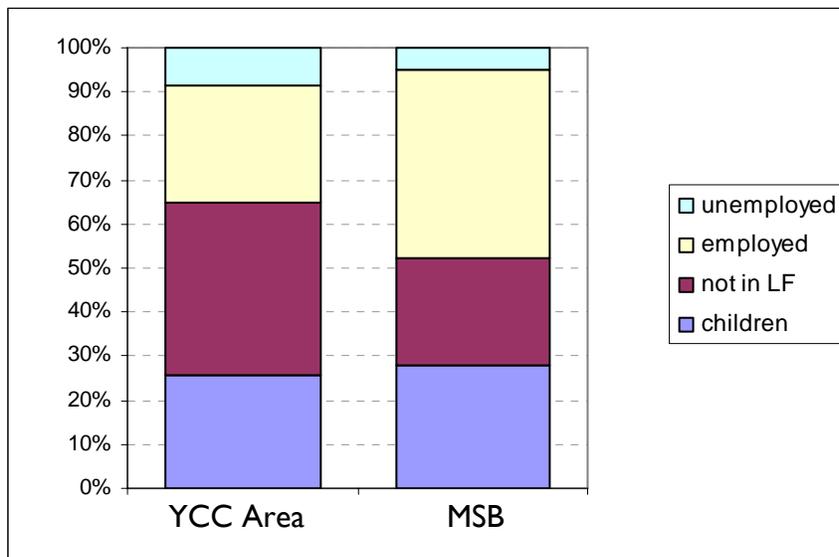


A second key piece of information comes from comparing the year 2000 workforce and employment picture for the YCC Area and the Borough. This comparison shows that the YCC Area has higher official unemployment (which only includes people actively looking for work) and a much lower rate of labor force participation. These data indicate that the link between employment and population growth could be weaker than it might be for the MSB as a whole. For example, YCC Area residents may simply prefer to have a higher ratio of people to cash economy workers than residents of other places.

The other implication of these employment data is that, like many rural Alaskan communities, people reside in the YCC Area because they enjoy the place and the lifestyle it offers, and make a living through a combination of part time work, barter and trade, subsistence activities and frugality.

**Table 4: Year 2000 Employment Comparison**

<b>Workforce and Employment</b>	<b>Y Community</b>		<b>Mat-Su Borough</b>	
Total population	956	100%	59,322	100%
Children under 16	245	26%	16,617	28%
Adults not in labor force	377	39%	14,482	24%
Employed (includes military)	253	26%	25,356	43%
Seeking work and unemployed	81	8%	2,867	5%



A third important piece of information comes from the census data on migration. Table 5 (on the following page) shows that 54% of the Y Community Council Area population over age 5 had been in the same house in 1995. Twenty percent of the year 2000 population of the YCC Area was in-migrants during the past 5 years from elsewhere in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The most important lesson from these data appears to be that migration patterns for YCC Area residents differ hardly at all from migration patterns for MSB residents overall. Unfortunately, census data do not reveal who moved *away* from the YCC Area, so it is not possible to get a complete picture of migration.

**Table 5: Comparison of Where Year 2000 Residents Lived in 1995**

In-migration	Y Community		Mat-Su Borough	
Population over age 5:	897	100%	55,170	100%
In 1995, these people:				
Lived in the same house	486	54%	27,247	49%
Lived elsewhere in MatSu	179	20%	12,012	22%
Lived outside Matsu, in AK	127	14%	7,792	14%
Lived outside Alaska	105	12%	8,119	15%

A final piece of important information comes from the census data on commuting time (one-way) to work. As shown in Table 6, about 10 percent of YCC Area residents do appear to commute to Wasilla, Palmer and even Anchorage. Nineteen respondents reported a commute of 90+ minutes each way to work. These data suggest that the Anchorage labor market exerts some (but not a great deal) of direct influence on levels of Y Community Council Area population and employment.

**Table 6: Commuting Time to Work Comparison**

Time commuting one-way to work	Y Community		Mat-Su Borough	
Total workers in sample	239	100%	24,649	100%
worked at home	60	25%	1,547	6%
0-30 minutes	129	54%	12,101	49%
30-60 minutes	24	10%	4,881	20%
60+ minutes	26	11%	6,120	25%
mean travel time (minutes)	26.8		40.7	

### Projections of Future Growth

Although it is dangerous to read too much into these data, they are all consistent with a “model” in which economic growth in Anchorage and population growth in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough lead to congestion and increased density that tends to “push” people farther north towards the YCC-Talkeetna area, with a time lag of several years. Recent road improvements make commuting to Palmer, Wasilla, and even Anchorage more feasible. At the same time that growth in the urban centers exerts a push on people seeking to maintain a more rural lifestyle, the economy also pushes more jobs outward and increases the economic “pull” of places like the YCC Area. This effect, however, is more attenuated.

Based on this reasoning, it is plausible that the YCC Area population can continue to grow slightly faster than the Matanuska-Susitna population, although YCC Area employment probably cannot. However, this extra growth potential is unlikely to continue very far past 2010, because the base on which growth is measured will be much higher. There are also recent population estimates which suggest that population growth in the YCC Area is *less* than population growth in the Borough. These must be given some weight as well.

Taking all of these factors into consideration, outlined below are “base case,” “high case,” and “low case” projections for future growth of population and employment in the Y Community Council Area. Each projection is tied to a corresponding growth rate for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough which was produced by a recent set of forecasts using the ISER econometric model.

## Base Case

In the base case, MSB population continues to grow at 3%, which is 3 times the Anchorage rate through 2010, and then tapers off somewhat. This base case assumes the YCC Area population grows at the same relatively rapid rate as the Borough as a whole. As Table 7 shows, this is about 3% per year through 2020.

**Table 7: Base Case Growth Projection**

	ISER Projections			Growth Rates		
	2000	2010	2020	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020
<b>Base Case</b>						
<b>Drivers</b>						
Population (000)						
Mat-Su	59.4	81.2	108.4	4.1%	3.2%	2.9%
Anchorage	260.0	284.7	332.3	1.4%	0.9%	1.6%
Alaska	627.2	700.1	826.8	1.3%	1.1%	1.7%
Employment (000)						
Mat-Su	12.0	15.8	20.7	6.0%	2.8%	2.7%
Anchorage	131.5	141.6	160.3	1.9%	0.7%	1.2%
Alaska	328.3	354.6	398.4	1.7%	0.8%	1.2%
<b>Specific Assumptions for Y Community</b>						
Employment growth = Mat-Su employment growth					2.8%	2.7%
Population growth = Mat-Su rate					3.2%	2.9%

## High Case

In the high case, the underlying driver variables (i.e., the Matanuska-Susitna growth projections) are quite high to begin with. It is further assume that the YCC Area population will grow 1% faster than the Borough population through 2020. As Table 8 shows, this equates to a continuation of the rapid growth of the 1990s for the next 6-7 years, followed by slower percentage growth (but the base on which it is measured will be much larger).

**Table 8: High Case Growth Projection**

	ISER Projections			Growth Rates		
	2000	2010	2020	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020
<b>High Case</b>						
<b>Drivers</b>						
Population (000)						
Mat-Su	59.4	97.2	132.9	4.1%	5.0%	3.2%
Anchorage	260.0	338.3	391.4	1.4%	2.7%	1.5%
Alaska	627.2	822.8	970.3	1.3%	2.8%	1.7%
Employment (000)						
Mat-Su	12.0	19.5	26.2	6.0%	5.0%	3.0%
Anchorage	131.5	169.2	191.5	1.9%	2.6%	1.2%
Alaska	328.3	423.1	480.2	1.7%	2.6%	1.3%
<b>Specific Assumptions for Y Community</b>						
Employment growth = Mat-Su employment growth					5.0%	3.0%
Population growth = Mat-Su rate + 1%					6.0%	4.2%

## Low Case

In the low case, the MSB population and employment are projected to grow at less than 3% per year. For this case I assume that employment in the YCC Area will reflect broader labor market conditions, leading to a lower growth rate.

**Table 9: Low Case Growth Projection**

Low Case	ISER Projections			Growth Rates		
	2000	2010	2020	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020
<b>Drivers</b>						
Population (000)						
Mat-Su	59.4	77.4	98.6	4.1%	2.7%	2.5%
Anchorage	260.0	259.1	290.8	1.4%	0.0%	1.2%
Alaska	627.2	655.0	742.4	1.3%	0.4%	1.3%
Employment (000)						
Mat-Su	12.0	15.1	19.0	6.0%	2.3%	2.3%
Anchorage	131.5	131.7	141.5	1.9%	0.0%	0.7%
Anch/MatSu labor mkt	143.5	146.8	160.5	2.2%	0.2%	0.9%
Alaska	328.3	329.6	349.1	1.7%	0.0%	0.6%
<b>Specific Assumptions for Y Community</b>						
Employment growth = Anchorage/Mat-Su combined growth					0.2%	0.9%
Population growth = Mat-Su rate					2.7%	2.5%

## Conclusion

Available data suggest that the Y Community Council Area is significantly different from the Matanuska-Susitna Borough because it has an older working-age population and lower labor force participation. Some YCC Area residents commuted to Anchorage, suggesting that the community is somewhat tied to the larger labor markets. Using a series of forecasts for Matanuska-Susitna Borough population and employment which project continued growth in the region, and at faster rates than Anchorage, the YCC Area population is projected to grow at between 2.7% and 6.0% per year through 2010. During the subsequent decade, these rates will drop to between 2.5% and 4.2% per year.

Actual growth rates will reflect a range of forces, some of which are well beyond what the community can control, others which can be influenced. In the former category are issues like the state of the Alaska, national and world economy, and broad trends in tourism and retirement activity. In the latter category are a range of activities affecting what kind of place the YCC Area is to live, visit and work – the topics of this plan.

**Table 10: Growth Scenarios Summary**

Population Size	
YCC Area population in 1990	454
YCC Area population in 2002	1,014
<b>Future Growth Scenarios</b>	
Base Case	1,750
High Case	2,500
Low Case	1,600

## Other Factors Affecting Growth & Change in Area

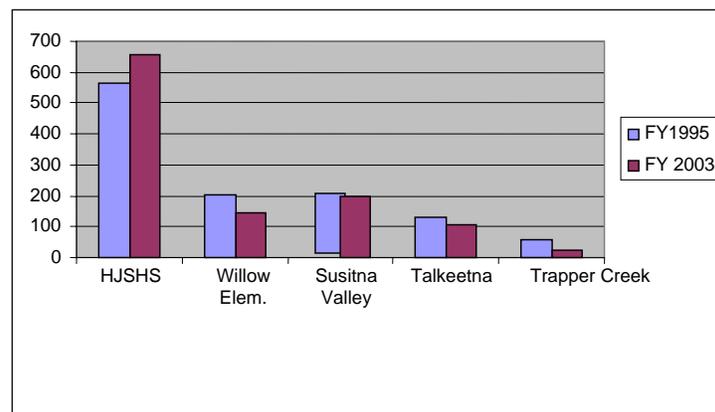
The remainder of this chapter gives an overview of some of the elements that are affecting growth in the YCC Area, and also some additional evidence of how the area is growing and changing.

### Parks Highway Improvements

In 2000 the Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT) and Public Utilities studied traffic volume and determined that approximately 2,200 vehicles use the Parks Highway between Willow and Trapper Creek each day. They expect this traffic volume to grow to 4,700 daily trips by 2030. The Alaska DOT has been improving the Parks Highway and is planning future improvements to alleviate future traffic congestion. An upgrade is planned on the two lane section that passes through Willow to ease current traffic congestion. Improvements are also planned for the Parks Highway from Kashwitna River north to the Talkeetna Spur Road. These upgrades will shorten the commute into the growing selection of jobs in the Wasilla area, and make the community more accessible to visitors and second home owners.

### Stable to Declining School Enrollment

Over the last 10 years, school enrollment in the northern Matanuska-Susitna Borough has been stable to slightly declining (see figure below). High School enrollment edged upwards, while elementary school enrollment fell. In contrast, schools to the south have experienced clear increases. The combination of data on enrollment, age and population growth, suggest most YCC Area growth is tied to older people, retirees, and second home owners. Families with young children are less prevalent, perhaps because of limited employment opportunities.

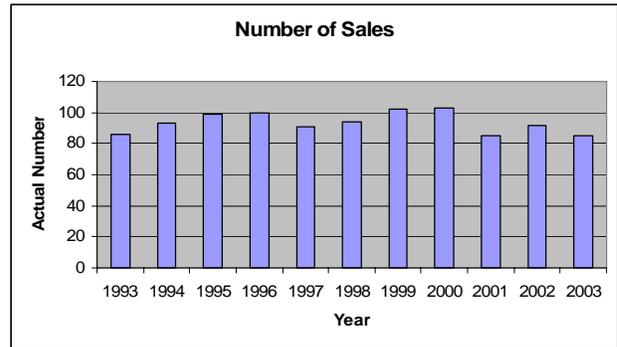
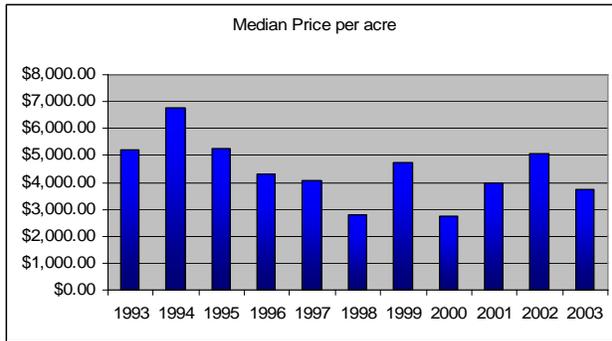


### Land Sales

Land values in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough have steadily increased over the last decade. One illustration of this is average cost of new single family homes in the Palmer Wasilla area, which increased from \$105,600 in 1996, to \$151,700 in 2002.

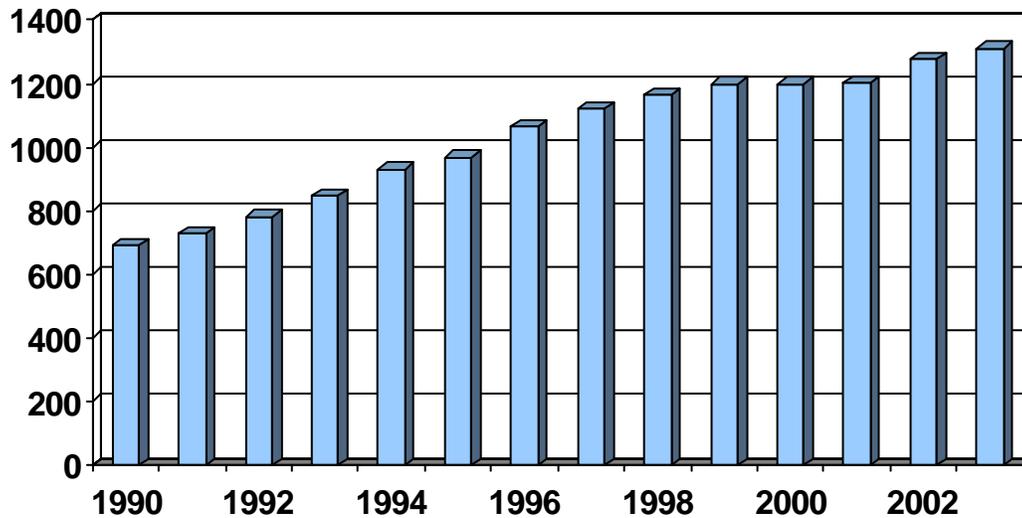
For the YCC Area, several local real estate agents were interviewed to gain a sense of real estate activity and prices. The two tables below show the trends in median price and the number of sales. A significant portion of sales occur without involvement of a real estate agent, and this information is included in these tables.

The annual number of Y Community Council Area land sales has been relatively stable over the past decade. The median price per acre has been more variable. Most land sold in the area is in relatively large parcels (5 acres or more) without services and without special amenities. This land commonly sells at between \$1,000 and \$3,000 per acre, a price that has remained stable over time. Waterfront parcels, view parcels or other more unique properties will sell for much higher value. The price for these less common properties has grown over the last 10 years.



### Tourism Growth Rates In Alaska

Like Alaska as a whole, tourism grew dramatically in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough between 1990 and 2000. Most recently, as the table below shows, out-of-state visitors to Alaska have continued to grow, but at a declining rate.



Source: Alaska Visitor Statistics Program and ATIA

## **BACKGROUND**

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### **Community Values**

*“The Gathering we had was really very amazing. There was no impinging on other people. There were some different points of view, but there wasn’t any great polarization. People listened to each other.”*

This chapter provides a snapshot of community values, based on the summary of views and opinions expressed at the Spring 2003 Gathering. This information, along with the input from the Spring 2004 Workshops, are the driving forces behind this comprehensive plan.

### **The Gathering**

On April 25-26, 2003, the Y Community Council Area held a gathering at the Susitna Valley High School with 130 community members. Hosted by local residents with support from the Y Community Council Area, MSB and the National Park Service, the intent of the Gathering was to “stimulate interest in developing a sense of community in the area and to determine which common currents of interest exist among residents for improving the community.”<sup>1</sup>

There were several positive and practical outcomes from the Gathering, including an increased sense of community identity and the resolving to control future development. The Gathering was generally considered a successful step toward community-wide planning.

### **Organization & Structure**

Professional facilitators guided community members through a series of discussions and work sessions over the course of the weekend. The sessions encouraged public debate and civic awareness. They began the process of identifying community issues and goals. In the end, about 24 separate community goals were identified by the participants.

Participants also identified the major issues and challenges facing the Y Community Council Area. These issues are listed below, summarized under headings that are relevant to the comprehensive planning process. They represent the broader range of comments collected during the Gathering’s work sessions and group discussions.

In order to prioritize specific goals for further development, Gathering participants were each allotted six “points.” Participants used these points to vote on the three goals most important to them. When the voting results were tallied, five goals were clearly identified as priorities of community-wide importance. The top priority was the creation and adoption of a Y Community Council Area Comprehensive Plan.

After the Gathering, community members met and worked on all of these issues. During the November 2004 Community Workshop, community members identified the community’s top priorities, which are summarized on the following pages. This comprehensive plan is part of the effort to address the community’s top priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> 2003 Y Community Gathering Report, 10.

## **PRIORITY GOALS**

1. Establish a community comprehensive plan
2. Identify and dedicate local backcountry trails, rural park locations
3. Establish/expand local fire service areas
4. Community Center/Town site
5. Improve communication among community members

## **COMMUNITY STRENGTHS**

The Gathering was also a time for identifying the community's strengths. Some specifics mentioned were:

- Talented diverse population: business people, artists, musicians, writers, athletes
- Freedoms available
- Rural environment
- Know your neighbors

## **ISSUES & CHALLENGES**

### **Land Use**

- “Solitude, but not isolation”
- Concentrate and/or screen commercial development along the Parks Hwy (don't become Wasilla)
- Maintain today's rural sense of life
  - Views
  - Large tracts of open land, of roadless “wilderness”
  - Rivers, lakes, wildlife
  - Access to Talkeetna Mountains and backcountry
  - Subsistence
  - Access to firewood
  - Access to trails

## Recreation, Open Space, Trails

- Retain, improve trail system
- Reserve open space, easy “out the backdoor” access
- Multi-use recreation center
- Community parks
- Playground for kids
- Need a community recreation development plan

## Image/”Sense Of Community”

- A collection of communities, very spread out
- Current image “driveway to Talkeetna”; “Y name is lousy, therefore not taken seriously”
- Promote positive image
- Develop a sense of community, but respect diversity of area: “Diversity with one voice”
- Establish a town center(s)
- Pick a better name

## Circulation

- Bypass
- Develop plan for feeder residential roads; plan for likely future residential growth
- Trails – see Recreation section above

## Economy

- “Busy summers, relaxed winters”
- Need a stronger economic base – currently mostly seasonal, mostly tourism; growing numbers of retirees
- Need balanced development – improve employment and business opportunities for locals, while meeting other community goals
- Take full advantage of diverse, remarkable human resources
- Attract private businesses to provide improved services to residents (groceries, bank, clothing)
- Options?
  - Timber – valuable resource if used intelligently
  - Road system and abundant private land, “room to grow”
  - Farming – small, shrinking
  - Mining – in decline
  - Tourism – great natural beauty

## Environment

- “Healthiest community in America”
- Maintain clean air, clean water, clean streams
- Stream and lake water quality monitoring programs
- Better planned timber harvests
- Manage threat of wildfire

## **Community Services, Facilities**

- More educational opportunities for community residents
- Need improved fire service
- 24/7 health service, emergency medical service
- Need library, ball park, child care facility
- Better programs for art; community schools and summer programs
- Better programs for youth & seniors, summer youth programs, places for youth to meet
- Waysides on Parks Highway with trashcans, restrooms
- Public water spigot
- Manage uncontrolled waste disposal
- DSL/Internet access
- Indoor pool
- Better use of existing facilities

## **Community Center/Town Center**

- Improved meeting facilities
- Place to bring people together
- Services center: bank, post office, grocery, restaurant

## **Community Events**

- Better facilities for events, festivals

## Leadership/Information/Communication

- Need a better community communication network (explore existing network: bulletin boards, phone, newspaper, email, radio; option for newsletter)
- Need mechanism providing residents more local control, more influence over public services, influence over decisions by MSB, state, federal government; also over decisions by large landowners
- Need a community plan rather than just letting it happen or have others do it for us
- Need better structure for communication between “neighborhoods” and Y Community Council Area
- Community is very reactive – comes together when against things
- Y Community Council Area, community generally lacks funding to carry out community priorities
- Need community system for conflict resolution
- MSB satellite office
- Establish a community non-profit organization

## MAJOR GOALS & STRATEGIES

### Land Use & Town Center

*“The land is cheap and it’s nice and quiet.”*

#### Overview

The Y Community Council Area has grown steadily over the last 15 years. It is likely this growth will continue. The area has extensive vacant private land, estimated at over 30,000 acres. The majority of this land is physically suited for development. There are currently over 4500 vacant subdivided lots in the community. The area’s attractive setting is increasingly drawing retirees and second home owners. Over the next 10 to 20 years, if the state economy stays healthy, recent growth trends for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough continue, and the Parks Highway continues to be improved, population in YCC Area could easily grow to double or triple its current size.



Goals for land use are listed below, based on community opinions expressed in the 2003 Gathering, the Spring and Fall 2004 Community Workshops, and ongoing work by the Community Planning team.

#### Land Use & Town Center Goals

- 1. Maintain the community’s rural character.**
- 2. Expand local serving commercial services; protect the scenic quality of the land along the Parks Highway and Spur Road by encouraging commercial development in clustered centers, and screening development**
- 3. Create a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use town center, to include places to meet friends and neighbors, venues for events and community meetings, a farmers market, commercial services like a bank, Post Office, grocery, restaurants; provide sufficient utilities to support higher density development.**
- 4. Guide location and character of development with significant off-site impacts to minimize impacts on environmental and community quality, particularly industrial activities and natural resource development, e.g. coal-bed methane, logging, gravel extraction, etc. Encourage forms of development that create economic opportunity and help sustain the area’s rural character, including agriculture and timber harvesting.**

## **GOAL I Maintain the Community's Rural Character.**

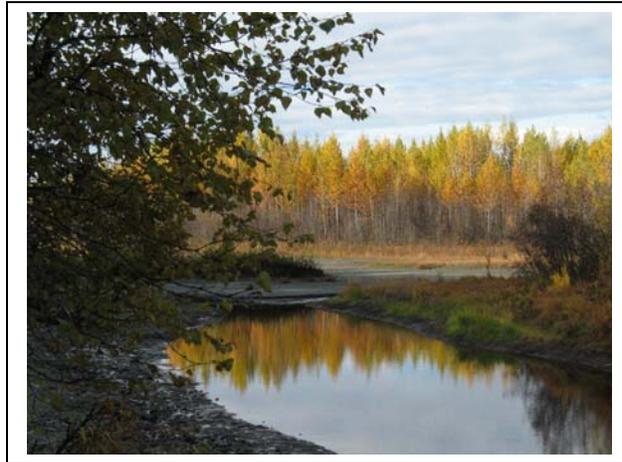
### **BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES**

Participants at the 2003 Gathering and the Spring 2004 Comprehensive Plan Workshops both made clear their enthusiasm for the area's natural setting and rural character. Characteristics that were noted include "nature and recreation", "quietness" and "lakes and streams." One person said, "We have solitude without isolation." Other qualities noted include mostly low density housing; diversified agriculture; large tracts of open land; ready access to trails, wildlife, firewood and subsistence resources; space to spread out; good views, especially of Denali and the Alaska Range; lack of constraints on use and relatively low population.

Many people earn at least a portion of their living from the land, through agriculture, timber harvesting and subsistence. A notable feature for out-of-town visitors is the change in the character on and off the Parks Highway: when you are off the Parks and two cars pass, people routinely wave, like in small towns around Alaska. Without community action many of these qualities will diminish over time.

Most housing in the Y Community Council Area is relatively low density. As the table on the following page shows, the large majority of the private land in the YCC Area is divided into large lots, typically 2-5 acres in size with many lots (over 1300) more than 5 acres per lot. The exception is the set of over 2500 lots of 1 acre or less, almost all of which are located in the Caswell Lakes area; there are also smaller lots in Moose Meadows and the Sunshine Lakes, and town site areas. The Caswell Lakes area was subdivided in anticipation of the capital move, before State and Borough minimum lot size rules were adopted. In many instances, people living in this area have acquired several contiguous lots, to create a larger parcel more in keeping with the area's rural character. Most residents live in the YCC Area, rather than Anchorage or Wasilla, because they prefer larger lots, and want more space between homes and a strong sense of the natural environment.

Currently there are no Matanuska-Susitna Borough rules setting minimum housing densities, other than those tied to utilities and water quality. For homes relying on on-site well and septic systems, the Borough has adopted State Department of Environmental Conservation regulations requiring at least 40,000 SF per lot, and at least 20,000 SF of well drained soils. Where land quality is low, meeting this latter standard can require lots of 2, 3 or more acres. If community septic or water systems are built, densities can be higher.



"Solitude without isolation" – fall on lower Sheep Creek

**Table 11: YCC Area Parcel Sizes**

ACRES	NUMBER OF LOTS	PERCENT OF TOTAL	Number Improved	Percent Improved
>160	91	2%	8	9%
160 to >100	77	1%	21	27%
100 to >40	145	2%	32	22%
40 to >20	285	5%	43	15%
20 to >10	260	4%	46	18%
10 to >5	450	8%	150	33%
5 to >2	1092	18%	357	33%
2 to >1	745	13%	244	33%
1 to >0	2784	47%	632	23%
	5929	1	1533	26%

Table by Agnew::Beck, based on 2003 data provided the MSB Assessors Department

## HOW? – MEANS TO MAINTAIN RURAL CHARACTER

**A. Housing Densities - Encourage relatively low density residential development in the majority of the community. In a few areas, for example, at the planned town center and as part of cluster “open space” subdivisions, encourage higher density housing.**

For most of the YCC Area, the water quality-related policies described above have achieved the goal of maintaining relatively low densities. Over the longer term, however, the availability of community water and/or sewer systems, coupled with growth pressures and changes in regulations, could lead to steadily increasing densities. As a result this plan establishes the policy below.

Maintenance of current relatively low densities in the large majority of the YCC Area is strongly encouraged. The general target for minimum lot sizes is at least 2 acres/housing unit. For the purposes of this policy, a housing unit is defined to include a single family unit or duplex with the option for a secondary “mother in law” apartment.

Typical densities should be lower than this general target in poorly-drained wetland areas and adjoining major rivers and streams (see more in chapter on Open Space and Recreation.) In addition, in some neighborhoods residents wish to keep densities lower than this overall target. In the Montana Creek neighborhood the general target for lot sizes is 5 acres per unit. Maintaining low densities will help sustain rural character, preserve agricultural opportunities, and by limiting the total number of houses, help maintain water quality, protect wetlands, and retain habitat and recreation opportunities.

In certain areas of the YCC Area, residential use at densities greater than 2 acres per housing unit will better serve community needs. Higher density housing, in the right location and if well-designed and well-built, brings a number of benefits, including providing for more affordable housing, reducing costs for providing utilities, and concentrating housing near commercial centers (so more people walk to services). Clustering housing and higher densities can help to retain open space. Downtown Talkeetna is an example of a small Matanuska-Susitna community where smaller lots have created an attractive place to live and visit.

Areas identified for housing on lots of between 1 and 2 acres per unit include land within approximately 1 mile of the Parks and Spur Roads (excluding areas explicitly identified above), and land within open space subdivisions. Some portions of the YCC Area are appropriate for higher

density housing – greater than 1 unit per acre. This latter style of housing could include single family homes served by community water and sewer systems, as well as townhouses, apartments or other forms of attached housing. This higher density of housing is appropriate in the vicinity of the planned Sunshine town center and Caswell neighborhood commercial area. Single family lots less than 1 acre on community well and sewer are allowed within open space subdivisions.

The land use districts information at the end of this chapter sets out more specific guidance for housing density policies. Specific actions to refine and implement these policies will be part of the Special Land Use District that is expected to implement this comprehensive plan. The Borough also allows a group of landowners to establish a localized Special Use District setting minimum lot sizes (MSB Municipal Code, Chapter 17, section 17.75). While this approach could be used to set lot sizes in specific locations, the preferred approach to maintaining the community's rural character is to implement the goals of this comprehensive plan over broader areas through a Special Use District.

### **B. Growth – Grow, but not too much.**

Many of the qualities that residents most appreciate about the YCC Area come from the relatively low population, and the fact that much of the land in the area is still undeveloped. At the same time, the community recognizes the benefits that growth brings (e.g., more people to pay for desired services like a community center building or improved fire protection).

This plan is based on the view that growth creates benefits and problems, and likely is inevitable. The community's main responsibility is to guide the character and consequences of growth, rather than make any direct attempt to limit growth. The plan does, however, identify certain types of development, and certain locations, where development should be limited, for example, along rivers and streams.

### **C. Open Space - Maintain and improve public access to public open space, waterways and trails. Retain the “natural feel” of the community and the dominate sense of natural landscapes – forests, wetlands, streams, wildlife, views.**

The strong sense of the natural landscape is an essential part of the community's rural feel. One key element is “out the backdoor” access to recreational open space; another is the fact that developed areas constitute small, occasional breaks in the intact pattern of forest, rather than the other way around. These qualities tend to dissipate as a community grows – vacant lots fill with buildings, trees get cut, roads built, habitats are eliminated or degraded, access to open space fades. In a growing area not all these changes can be avoided, but a community can hold onto certain key elements. Specific strategies adopted as part of this plan include those below. Details of these strategies are described in the open space/recreation chapter that follows, and in the river and stream land use district at the end of this chapter.

### **D. Establish and Apply “Open Space” Subdivision Policies**

Traditional subdivision practices typically result in 100% of a parcel being subdivided into smaller private lots. A number of alternatives to this practice have been successfully developed around the country. These alternative models - referred to as cluster subdivisions, planned unit developments, or “open space subdivisions” – allow for slightly smaller lot sizes, in exchange for portions of the original subdivided property being designated for protection of open space such as wetland areas or buffers on lakes or streams or for recreation use such as trails. Lands designated for these purposes

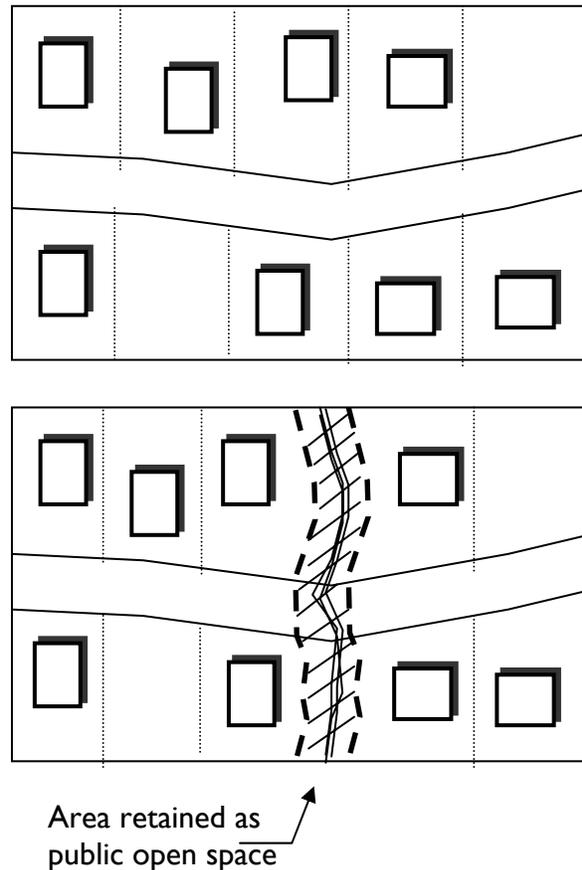
must either be dedicated to a homeowners association or to Borough ownership. Working with the Borough, a similar policy should be established and applied in the YCC Area.

**Figure 1: Standard vs. Open Space Subdivisions: An Illustration on a 10 acre Parcel - Same number of lots and houses, two different layouts**

Top – Standard subdivision: ten approximately 2.5 acre lot; all available land is sold.

Below: “Open Space Subdivision:” same number of lots; average lot size is slightly smaller, difference is used to retain land for open space, trails, and stream buffers. Done correctly, this approach increases access to amenities and produces higher average value for all lots. The residential land near Westchester Lagoon in Anchorage is an urban example of this concept. Lots 2-3 tiers back from the lagoon are highly desirable because they have access to the lake, its trails and picnic areas.

To be most successful open space land needs to be aligned with similar open space in adjoining properties, e.g. to establish linked open spaces along a river or trail. The Borough, a land trust or a Homeowners Association needs to hold the title and manage the land.



### E. Encourage Consolidation of Small Lots

Lots in the Caswell Lakes area are very small – averaging less than ½ acre in size. Residents frequently acquire several adjoining lots to help retain a more rural character, and to have adequate space for separation from neighbors and on site septic systems and a well. Where adjoining lots are held by a single owner, these owners frequently would like to consolidate the parcels into a single larger parcel.

This same issue has come up in downtown Talkeetna, and in response, the Borough, in the Talkeetna SPUD, has established a “group processing” approach for speeding and simplifying lot consolidations. The Borough and interested YCC Area community residents should arrange to apply this simplified procedure to vacate interior lot lines in the Caswell Lakes area (and other areas as appropriate). This investment would reduce ongoing administrative costs for landowners and the Borough. In addition, larger lot sizes would help protect water quality, and rural quality of the life.

## **GOAL 2 Expand Local-Serving Commercial Services; protect the scenic quality of land along the Parks Highway and Spur Road, by encouraging commercial development in clustered centers, and screening development.**

### **BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES**

In past public workshops, residents have stated their desire for growth in local-serving commercial services – for example a bank, post office and more shops and stores. There has been an even stronger concern that the Parks Highway and Spur Road should not be lined with strip commercial development like what is found in the southern Matanuska-Susitna Borough. While there is a respect for the rights of individuals to use their private property as they see fit, it is recognized that some form of land use controls are needed to prevent development from scattering along the length of the community’s major roads.

The first step in considering and guiding the amount, location and character of future commercial growth is to consider market trends. Future commercial growth in the YCC Area will be a driven by a range of forces:

- Increases in year round and seasonal population, locally and in nearby communities.
- Reaching “demand thresholds” - as new levels of demand are reached, a new set of services become viable, e.g., at a certain population size the area can support a local bank branch.
- Increasing spending by visitors (more visitors and/or more spending per visitor).
- Location, layout and appearance of commercial centers. Visitors and residents will spend more if development is concentrated in a convenient, attractive town center rather than in a place where the same set of stores is scattered. Wasilla’s commercial pattern, for example, provides little incentive for discretionary tourist spending.

Most residents get the goods and services they need from outside the area, in Wasilla and Anchorage. However, as local population has grown, commercial activity in the area has slowly and steadily increased, primarily in Sunshine. Several new retail and service businesses have been established, existing businesses report recent growth in demand, and a set of new businesses are preparing for construction. The Sunshine area also has increasingly becoming a center for public facilities, including the school, health clinic and senior center.

For the purposes of this plan, it will be assumed that over the next 10-20 years, commercial uses will at least match the rate of population growth in the YCC Area, and more likely exceed this number, with most of this growth in the Sunshine area. If the area grows as it has over the last 15 years, the Y Community Council Area is likely to have a significantly expanded set of commercial services. A key issue for the community, therefore, is the location and character of this growth – should it be concentrated in one or two locations, or spread along the length of the Parks Highway?

## **HOW? – MEANS TO REDUCE HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL SPRAWL**

Communities can use two primary strategies to avoid commercial sprawl. One is to encourage or require development to locate in clustered locations, the other is to influence the appearance of individual development projects, e.g. through controlling the appearance of roadside development by retaining road front vegetative buffers. The first of these strategies is far more powerful, but requires a willingness to restrict commercial development in some areas, while encouraging it in others.

At previous public workshops, there was broad agreement on the general goal of discouraging sprawl and concentrating large scale commercial growth, and the need to take specific actions to reach this goal. This topic was made a particular focus of the Nov 04 workshop. Specific actions agreed to include:

### **A. Appearance of Roadside Commercial Development - Encourage retention of buffers, trees and other landscape features so roadside development is attractive.**

Where commercial development locates along the highway, good site planning, landscaping, controls on signage, etc., can help make development more attractive. Policies include:

- Set standards for retention of retention of vegetated buffers along the front and sides of lots that face the Parks Highway and Spur Road. Buffers should be consistent with Firewise landscaping standards for defensible space around structures, and with the rural/agricultural character of the area.
- Establish rules so signs do not significantly reduce the visual quality of lands along the highway.

### **B. Location of Commercial Development - Encourage new commercial develop to locate in relatively concentrated nodes, rather than scattered along the length of the Parks Highway and Spur Road.**

In order to maintain the rural character of the YCC Area that residents now enjoy, and to take advantage of the fact that the highway currently has limited commercial development, large scale, new commercial development is discouraged along the Parks Highway and Spur Roads. Without controls on commercial growth, over time, commercial development will spread along much of the length of the Parks Highway, significantly reducing the visual quality of the community, harming environmental quality, and reducing the chance for the more concentrated community town center sought by residents. Specific policies include:

- Establish areas where commercial growth is encouraged (the planned Sunshine town center, Caswell Creek neighborhood commercial center, a handful of clustered neighborhood commercial areas). Means to do this include developing the right kind of road access and utilities, trail connections, nearby residential development, and improvements in infrastructure such as water and sewer, and community facilities. These public improvements will create incentives for private developers to focus future commercial development in these areas.
- Discourage retail and related commercial uses in rural residential and open space areas (allow home-based businesses, agriculture, logging in these areas).
- Discourage large scale commercial development along the Parks Highway and Spur Roads, other than the Sunshine town center and Caswell Creek areas,

- Work with AK DOT/PF to minimize ‘curb cuts’ in the portions of the Parks Highway and Spur Road outside of the Sunshine & Caswell Creek commercial areas. Instead steps should be taken to consolidate access, for example, through shared drives, separate access roads, or frontage roads.

One Alaskan example of restraining commercial development is in Girdwood. Residents of that community were sufficiently concerned about commercial sprawl along the Alyeska Highway (the main road running from the Seward Highway to the base of the ski mountain) that they adopted a plan prohibiting all new commercial development on lots fronting the road. This policy has been in place for over a decade, and the result has been a steady increase in the diversity and success of businesses in the New Girdwood Townsite. One lesson from Girdwood is the need to designate sufficient area for commercial activities to allow for expected growth.

More detail on this policy is included in the Land Use District section of this plan; detailed policies to implement this policy will be developed as part of a Special Use District.

**GOAL 3** Create a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use town center, to include places to meet friends and neighbors, venues for events and community meetings, a farmers market, commercial services like a bank, post office, grocery, restaurants; provide sufficient utilities to support higher density development.

**BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES**

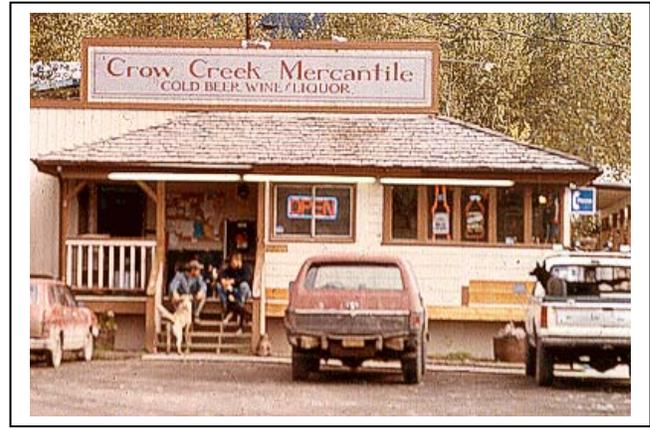
The other half of the actions started with Goal 2 is development of a concentrated “town center” - a clearly defined commercial and civic center for the community. Past public discussions have shown YCC Area residents have a strong desire for such a place. The desire for a town center was one of the highest-ranked priorities during the YCC Area 2003 Gathering. The Sunshine area is the logical location for a town center, with the option for smaller, neighborhood-oriented centers in the Sheep Creek Lodge/Caswell Creek area.

**Figure 2: Downtown Talkeetna**



Downtown Talkeetna: an example of a compact, pedestrian oriented center, with a mixture of shops, restaurants & parks, all with easy access to natural areas.

**Figure 3: New Girdwood Town Site**



New Girdwood Townsite – Another example of a small town, town center. Post Office is the “anchor” bringing residents together on a regular basis. Other uses include restaurants, shops & services.

Many small towns around Alaska and all over America are working to establish viable town centers, or as is often the case in the lower 48, to revitalize moribund main streets. The qualities of the town center sought for the YCC Area are outlined below. The town center area will have two sub-districts: an inner core, intended to be sufficiently concentrated to allow people to walk from store to store; and an outer ring to allow for larger scale commercial activities, with a more auto-oriented character.

Qualities of the pedestrian core portion of the town center are outlined below:

- Mixed Use – includes commercial services like bank, grocery, restaurants; bakery, bookstore, coffee shop; civic uses like post office, library, community; housing within walking distance.
- Good Access – located to be easily reached by vehicles, but to avoid large volumes of through traffic (which discourage walking).
- Pedestrian-Oriented – comfortable to move around without a car.
- A Center Of Community Life – includes indoor and outdoor spaces that provide venues for events and community meetings, including space for a farmers market.

- Social Life In Public Places – comfortable places to meet and visit with friends, neighbors, and strangers; option for fun (e.g., a play structure for kids, for adults).
- Link to Setting - take advantage of and protect natural setting, particularly the set of lakes in the Sunshine area.
- Helps give the Y Community Council Area a more distinct identity.
- Helps concentrate commercial development.

Creating a viable town center in the YCC Area will be challenging and will only be successful with the cooperative efforts of the public sector and private land owners and developers. General guidelines for creating a viable town center are outlined below.

## **HOW? – MEANS TO CREATE A VIABLE TOWN CENTER**

Developing a viable town center will require a multi-year process. Key actions to create a successful commercial and civic core for the YCC Area are outlined below; the Land Use District section at the end of this chapter sets the stage for carrying out these plans.

- A.** Clarify boundaries of town center - the selected town center site is the Sunshine area. The town center pedestrian core needs an area of between 10-30 acres (10 acres = 660'x660'). Successful, pedestrian-oriented town centers (and successful shopping malls) are typically no more than ½ and preferably ¼ mile in diameter. Town center boundaries included as part of this plan are preliminary, and will be refined during the preparation of a Special Use District, based on a more careful look at land use demands, land ownership and physical constraints. Some land within the boundaries of the preliminary and final town center boundaries may not be suited for commercial development, due to agricultural designations or physical limitations such as wetlands.
- B.** Meet with and reach agreement among land owners – public, private and institutional – regarding specific development goals for the properties.
- C.** Establish a phased development plan. This needs to include a funding strategy, for public and private investments, and more detailed master plan including roads and sidewalks, utilities, public buildings, amenities.
- D.** Improve access to the site, for vehicles and pedestrians. Provide good access into and through the area for pedestrians (trails to the site, sidewalks within); provide convenient vehicular access in the area and good visibility to the area from adjoining roads, but avoid high speed traffic through the area. Key to this plan will be working with the AK DOT/PF to establish a bypass in a way that supports town center development (see Circulation chapter for details).
- E.** Plan and develop infrastructure needed to support the concentrated development associated with successful town centers, including water, sewer and drainage.
- F.** Encourage the right set of uses (commercial, civic, residential, and recreational).
- G.** Create a comfortable, attractive environment that invites people to linger. Include public seating, sunlight, water features, attractive appropriately scaled buildings, historical information, undeveloped natural areas within and near the town center.
- H.** Adopt Special Use District that directs commercial development to the town center.

## **Figure 4: TOWN CENTER PRINCIPLES – PEDESTRIAN CORE**

### *ATTRACT PEOPLE WITH THE RIGHT MIX OF USES*

#### **1. MEET BASIC COMMERCIAL NEEDS OF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS**

Regular Convenience Needs - grocery, drug store, film, hardware, books, bank/ATM, cleaners, hair, auto, video/DVDs, cards, business services...

Food & Drink – restaurants, coffee, bakeries...

Specialty Shopping – clothing, art, homewares...

Civic/Public - library, courthouse, city hall, conference facilities

“Anchors” (some uses are more important than others) - post office, grocery store...

#### **2. CREATE DEMAND/ADD LIFE BY LOCATING POTENTIAL USERS WITHIN EASY WALKING DISTANCE**

Residential – single and multifamily housing, employee housing

Visitors – hotels, motels, inns, B&Bs

Employment - offices, other businesses (in addition to retail, services)

Institutional Uses - schools, churches, police, fire, day care

#### **3. MORE REASONS TO VISIT: “FIVE STAR” ATTRACTIONS**

Art & Information - visual & performing arts, museums, information centers

Private Recreation (movie theaters, video arcade)

### *TAMING/MAKING THE MOST OF THE AUTOMOBILE*

#### **4. VEHICULAR/TRANSIT/TRAIL ACCESS**

Provide Good Access for the Private Automobile – divert high speed, through traffic

Mitigate Undesirable Affects of Traffic & Roadways; Slow Traffic

Provide Alternatives To The Car - foot, ski, bike, transit

#### **5. PARKING**

Provide Enough Parking

Use Efficient Layouts (on-street, off-street)

Mitigate Adverse Affects of Parking (e.g. landscape parking)

Share Parking/Manage Parking Supply

#### **6. OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE (water, storm runoff, fire, etc.)**

Screen the Worst/Celebrate the Rest (water/sewer/drainage)

Good Lighting - save the stars

### *A GOOD PLACE TO WALK/CONCENTRATE USES*

#### **7. “CRITICAL MASS” - CONCENTRATE USES IN THE CENTER OF TOWN**

#### **8. CREATE A WALKABLE, COMPACT TOWN CENTER**

Create a Good Environment for Walking (Comfort, Safety, Attractions)

Concentrate Commercial Activities within an Area of 1/4 Mile Diameter

### *REASONS TO LINGER – PLEASURES OF PLACE & PEOPLE “What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people.” William Whyte*

#### **9. INVEST IN PUBLIC SPACE/PUBLIC LIFE**

Heart Of The Heart - town square/plaza

Provide Inviting Places To Linger – comfortable, inviting sidewalks and streets

Preserve Places Special to Locals

Establish “Sense of Habitation” – from public flowers to building design standards

#### **10. “SENSUAL DELIGHT”**

Food and Drink, Public Music & Dance, Evocative/Exotic Smells & Sounds

#### **11. FUN IN PUBLIC PLACES**

“Enjoyable Motion” - interesting ways to get around, from pure fun to functional

Places For Play - Kids Park, “Compact Sports”, “Street Toys” for small-scale adventure

#### **12. SPECIAL EVENTS**

Celebrate what makes your community unique

Devote public resources to create successful events

#### **13. IT PAYS TO MAINTAIN A SENSE OF PLACE**

Provide Good Orientation - a sense of entry, boundaries, clear center

Intricacy & Complexity - invite and reward exploration, provide surprises

Capture Good Views

Create Strong Ties to Natural Setting - bring nature in, protect habitat

Incorporate Local Materials - stone, plants, rocks

Maintain/Create Good Buildings (architecture) set quality standards, avoid big mistakes, worry more about bulk & setbacks than design

Tell Good Stories: public art, information “placemakers”

Celebrate History - weave history into art, buildings, place names...

Signage - clutter or information & character?

Hitting the Balance between “Real and Ersatz” - people love stories..

**GOAL 4** Guide location and character of development with significant off-site impacts to minimize impacts on environmental and community quality, particularly industrial activities and natural resource development, e.g. coal-bed methane, logging, gravel extraction, etc. Encourage forms of development that create economic opportunity and help sustain the area’s rural character, including agriculture and timber harvesting.

#### **BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES**

The community wants to maintain the largely natural, rural character of the community, and to protect the quality of residential neighborhoods. At the same time, the community recognizes the value of increasing opportunities for employment, and increasing the local tax base. The balance point between these goals is to accept economic development activities, as long as they are the right scale and do not impact their neighbors.

Development activities with potential for adverse impacts are discussed below.

*Mineral Extraction* – The YCC Area, like the rest of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough has potential for coal-bed methane extraction. If these uses are not well managed they can have significant impacts on quality of life and the natural environment. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough has recently established Borough-wide regulations to guide development of coal-bed methane related activity. This plan relies on those Borough-wide policies to address this issue.

*Commercial Timber, Commercial Agriculture* – The YCC Area has traditionally been home to a wide range of agricultural activities, and some commercial timber harvesting. State and Borough agriculture programs have been active, and current Borough records indicate there are approximately 55 parcels totaling 9700 acres designated for agriculture in the area. Included in this set of parcels are those that were sold as “ag rights only” – meaning the parcels are deed restricted to agricultural uses – and those where the owners derive at least 10% of their income from agriculture and consequently pay reduced Borough property taxes. There are additional landowners involved in agriculture but who chose not to participate in the Borough program. Agricultural activities include hay, primarily for people with horses and cows in Anchorage, Palmer and Wasilla, and production of fruits and vegetables such as gourmet lettuce and strawberries. Animal husbandry is another common agricultural activity; including beef, swine, sheep, horses, goats, rabbits, geese and yaks. These are raised for food, fiber, recreation, show and for use as working animals.

Agriculture in the YCC Area is primarily practiced at a modest scale. Products are for home use, local consumption, and for some operations, sales to retail sales and to individuals in Anchorage, Palmer, and Wasilla. One person said, “most people involved in agriculture are supplementing their income by subsistence activities or hoping to sell enough to cover their expenses and break even. People don't farm or get into agriculture hoping to get rich. It is a lifestyle choice.”

Commercial timber operations have traditionally been limited in the area. Like agriculture, timber-related activities have principally been a means to supplement incomes and support a rural lifestyle. Several small mills produce logs for cabins. A mill is not an uncommon sight at an individual home, and people mill local timber for a range of local uses. Generally the timber in the area is low value for traditional commercial logging. Much of the birch is old and not good quality; and spruce tends be small diameter and slow growing. Local timber resources are most important for local use for building and firewood, and offer potential for value-added products such as furniture.

In the last few months of the preparation of this plan, an operator has begun cutting timber in the area to be chipped and exported, using the port at Point MacKenzie. These larger scale harvests have created safety concerns related to use of local roads for logging trucks, reclamation practices, and environmental impacts.

*Sand And Gravel Extraction* – The YCC Area, in contrast to Matanuska-Susitna communities further to the south, has relatively modest sand and gravel resources. Currently gravel sites primarily serve local needs for road maintenance and construction. Sand and gravel operations create noise, dust, and if dug deep enough, can impact the availability and quality domestic well water.

*Industrial Activities* – There are few industrial activities in the area, including several auto repair/automobile wrecking yards. As these uses grow in scale, as they have in larger Borough communities to the south, they can become unsightly, and create noise and water quality impacts. This includes businesses that may start as small, home-based operations (e.g. an auto repair yard) and evolve into a large, ugly collection of junked cars.

In addition to reducing the adverse impacts of development, throughout the planning process, the community has emphasized its desire that the built environment be attractive, and a worthy companion to the area's natural setting. The quality of the built environment – buildings, sites, roads, signs, utilities, etc. - is important for maintaining the area's rural character, quality of life, and also economic health. By supporting land values, it helps to make the area more attractive to visitors and second home owners.

## **HOW? – MEANS TO GUIDE THE LOCATION & CHARACTER OF DEVELOPMENT**

### **A. Promote Agricultural and Timber Harvesting in a manner that helps create and maintain the rural lifestyle of the area.**

Utilize the resources available through the Upper Susitna Soil & Water Conservation District to ensure good practices of timber and agricultural activities consistent with traditional use in the area. Development of a Conservation or Timber Management Plan is strongly encouraged prior to land development. A conservation plan can help land owners design improvements like roads and bridges, and encourage sustainable development, for example, through practices to minimize erosion.

Ensure agriculture and timber harvests are managed to not create significant adverse impacts on neighboring properties, community life, water quality, or other natural resources. See following standards section for details. Set realistic expectations about the realities of life in rural Alaska (in the spirit of the “Rules of the West” – see Appendix G).

### **B. Guide Location of Development - Establish rules that restrict the location of potentially disruptive uses such as industrial and/or commercial development.**

The best way to reach this goal is to establish a special land use district that sets rules on the location and magnitude of future industrial and commercial development and resource extraction. The general philosophy guiding this strategy will be to reduce the impacts of potential development, rather than prohibit uses.

The potential for regulatory control over development is spread among several levels of government. In many instances, the most effective strategy for managing impacts is at the level of the Borough or the State. For example, on the issue of sand and gravel extraction, the Borough is working to establish rules requiring reclamation of gravel pits and other areas substantially altered by

resource use or extraction. The MSB is currently considering an ordinance addressing this issue for large-scale gravel operations, to apply in the YCC Area and throughout the Borough.

**C. Development Standards - Establish rules that require buffers, setbacks, limits on operation hours and similar development standards as a condition of industrial and/or commercial development. Establish rules to ensure existing and future development is attractive and contributes to the overall quality of YCC Area as a great place to live and visit.**

This objective addresses the direct impacts of development such as noise or traffic, as well as setting out standards to encourage quality, attractive development. Topics include building size, lighting, setbacks, signage, retention of vegetation, rules regarding storage of old cars and other equipment on residential land.

In addition to or instead of the mandatory standards that might be included in the Special Use District, the community may wish to develop and formally approve advisory design guidelines, as was done in the Talkeetna Area. The goal of these advisory guidelines is to address topics where the community wants to communicate expectations without mandating specific requirements. In Talkeetna, the guidelines address issues like building styles and building materials.

The Land Use District section at the end of this chapter sets out initial standards for each district. Below are standards that apply to all districts.

## **DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS - APPLY COMMUNITY-WIDE**

**Site Development - Protect unique site opportunities and constraints, including slope, natural vegetation, views. Maintain a sense of the natural setting.**

- Grading – encourage retention of natural contours.
- Site Disturbance – set standards limiting extent of allowed disturbance, discourage clearing and grading of full site as is commonly done along the Parks Highway in the core area of the Borough; generally encourage re-vegetation with native species.
- Natural Vegetation – maximize retention of existing vegetation.
- Drainage – set standards so development does not change drainage patterns or create drainage or icing problems on adjoining lots (e.g. ensure construction of driveways and other impervious areas does not increase summer runoff or winter ice on adjoining roads or properties); set standards to minimize erosion.
- Hazards and Sensitive Areas – minimize impacts of development on wetlands and other sensitive natural environments; avoid development in hazard areas, including floodplains, steep slopes.
  - Require at least the 75’ minimum setback from development to streams, lakes, wetlands and other water bodies; define “development” to include outbuildings, driveways, and other built elements that affect stream character.
  - Require use of drainage swales, holding basins and similar best management practices to ensure runoff from developed areas does not degrade quality of water in adjoining streams and lakes.
- Vegetative screening – retain a vegetative buffer along collector roads throughout the community

**Signage – Businesses need to be able to inform prospective customers of their location at services. At the same time, sign size and appearance needs to not degrade the visual quality of the community.**

- Prohibited Signs - prohibitions of signs such as: portable signs; signs mounted on top of buildings; and flashing, rotating, animated or intermittent lighted signs.
- Size of Signs – encourage modest sized signs: set standards for heights, square footage.

**Standards for Commercial, Industrial, Recreation, Tourism or any other Use that Creates Significant On & Off-Site Impacts - Maintain the natural, rural character of the community, the quality of residential neighborhoods and the visual quality of roads.**

Two sets of development standards are established – the first applies to all uses, the second to specific types of uses.

**Standards for All Development**

- Hours of operation – Limit hours of operation of to portions of the day when adjoining properties can reasonably expect peace and quiet, i.e., evenings, nights, early mornings.
- Commercial Use of Roads - Use of residential roads by trucks, heavy equipment is a concern of the community. Such use should be controlled, in terms of amount and timing of use, to minimize congestion, noise, dust and safety impacts on community roads. This policy is not intended to restrict use of roads by farm equipment, such as hay trucks or tractors.
- Reclamation Required – Return land used for mining, timber harvesting, sand and gravel extraction or similar uses to a useable state.
- Impacts on environment – Activities creating off-site impacts on water quality, air quality are not permitted.
- Building Height – In order to preserve and maintain the existing views of the mountains, lakes and other natural features, and to ensure buildings can be served by local fire fighting equipment, building height should not exceed three stories.
- Lighting – Prohibit lights from glaring onto adjoining properties; prevent upward directed lights that diminish dark skies. All strong lighting should be shielded in such a manner so that the light is directed down and away from the sky in order to protect views of the night sky and aurora borealis, and to avoid shining directly onto neighboring properties.
- Screening– Require landscaping and/or retention of natural vegetation to provide a visual screen between commercial, industrial or similar visually disruptive uses and adjoining properties.
- All buffers, river or roadside open spaces, etc., should allow for fuels management adequate to protect property and curtail the spread of wildfires within the community, including specific clearing, tree thinning and limbing, and the removal of high-risk material.

**Standards for Specific Uses**

- Coal Bed Methane & Mineral Extraction - All coal bed methane and mineral extraction activities shall comply with the MSB codes adopted in 2004 .

- Sand And Gravel Extraction – The following policies apply to all existing and future operations:
  - An approved Master Plan for Operations and Reclamation is required prior to commencing operations. Operators must put up a performance bond ensuring compliance to the master plan and other development standards.
  - Reclamation required – Return the land to a useable state.
  - Noise - If necessary to avoid disrupting neighboring uses, build sound reducing walls around the operation.
  - Use of residential roads by trucks, heavy equipment is a significant community concern. The amount and timing of use shall be limited to avoid congestion, noise, dust and safety impacts on community roads.
  
- Junk/Salvage Yards
  - Be located no closer than 1 mile to any lake, river or water body.
  - Obtain all permits as required by Federal, State, and Borough code, to control environmental impacts.
  - Properly dispose of all hazardous waste.
  - Provide screening as outlined above.
  
- Commercial Timber Harvests – The State Forest Practices Act governs certain aspects of timber harvest practices on public and private land, largely focused on water quality and fish habitat protection. The act requires sustainable practices on State and Borough land. The primary topics addressed by the act are protection of riparian areas, road construction and reforestation. All commercial timber harvests greater than 40 acres must submit a “Detailed Plan of Operations” (DPO) to the State Division of Forestry for multi-agency review prior to operations. The Division of Forestry is responsible for inspections and ensuring compliance with the DPO. In addition to the general DPO, the State and most other large institutional land owners require an additional, more focused management plan for each timber harvest area.

The following policies are recommended for all existing and future commercial timber operations in the YCC Area:

- The Borough should investigate the need to prepare an updated ordinance regarding timber harvests, modeled on the policies and process used by the State Division of Forestry.
- The Borough should ensure the following elements are part of any timber harvest contract:
  - Sustained yield basis - timber must be managed on a sustained yield basis (unless a conversion of land use has been approved in advance).
  - Plan of Operations - approved of a plan for operations and reforestation prior to commencing operations.
  - Reforestation – reforestation is required, the method to be determined based on site conditions at the time of harvest.
  - Use of public roads by vehicles that support logging shall be managed to avoid congestion, noise, dust and safety impacts on the community. Methods to address these issues include controls on the amount and timing of use and/or improvements to road surfaces.
  - Compliance and Enforcement - Require bonds for reforestation & performance.

## COMMUNITY PLAN LAND USE DISTRICTS

This section presents land use policy in the Y Community Council Area, using land use districts. Each district defines an area with generally similar types of land use issues, and similar intended future development.

Community plan land use district policies will provide the bridge between the broad goals of the comprehensive plan and the specific regulations in a Special Use District expected to be completed after the adoption of the YCC Area Comprehensive Plan. Policies in each Land Use District give general direction; the SPUD that follows will move forward consistent with this direction, and establish more specific enforceable standards and guidelines.

For each of the districts, the Comprehensive Plan presents policies on the following topics:

- Overall objectives
- Boundaries
- Preferred (and discouraged) land uses
- Generalized development standards

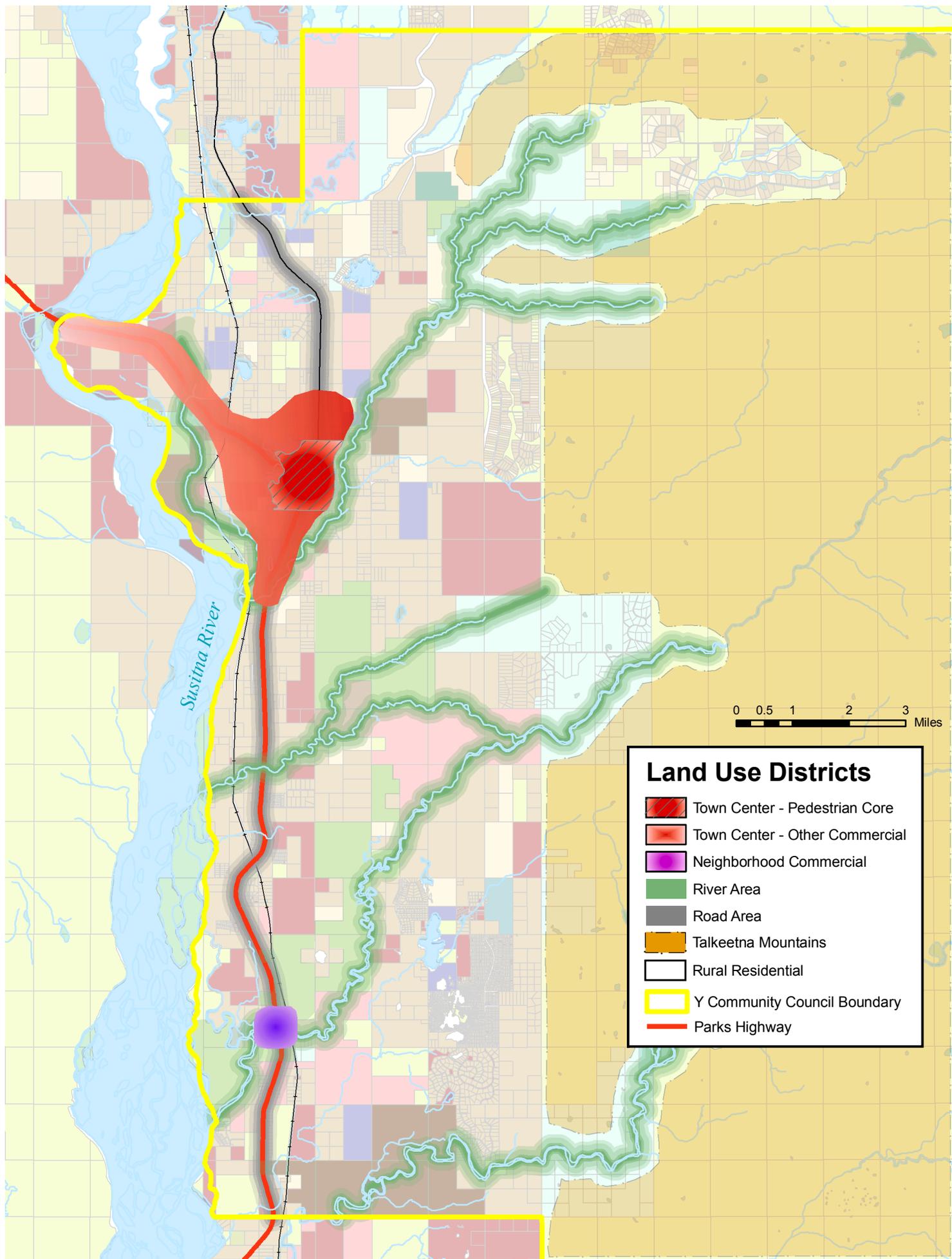
A map showing land use district boundaries is presented on the following page. Land use districts are listed below. After policies for each of these sections are presented, a final section presents general development standards that apply in all districts.

1. Town Center
2. Land Along Parks Highway and Spur Road
3. Rural Residential Areas
4. Land along Major Rivers and Streams
5. Mountains

It is the intent of this plan that existing uses, which may become legal, nonconforming uses, lots and structures in the Y area when a Special Use Area is developed, should be allowed to continue as "grandfathered" uses. Policies below express the general intent of this Comp Plan regarding such uses; specific language will be developed as part of the SPUD.

- At the time that a Special Use District may be adopted, uses that are inconsistent with the uses specified in the SPUD will be designated legal nonconforming land uses. These uses may be continued, and expanded within existing property boundaries, subject to compliance with borough regulations (e.g., setbacks).
- A legal nonconforming land use may be reestablished if partially or completely damaged by fire or other disaster.
- Legal non-conforming status "runs with the land," that is, the grandfathered right stays with the property even if ownership changes.

Like all the policies presented in this plan, these proposals emerged from the 2003 Community Gathering, the Spring and Fall 2004 Community Workshops, and work with the Community Planning team.



## **I. TOWN CENTER**

### **Overall Objectives**

As stated earlier in this chapter, the community wants to establish a concentrated, mixed-use town center, to include a diverse range of commercial and public uses, venues for events, a farmers market, community meetings and places to meet friends and neighbors. The town center is intended to serve as an amenity and convenience to YCC Area residents, to be a profitable place for local businesses, provide an attractive destination for visitors, and help build a positive image for the community.

See Goal 2, earlier in this chapter, for a complete description of objectives for this district.

### **Boundaries**

The town center needs a central, convenient location, easily reached, but slightly off the Parks Highway. The area needs to be a location where commercial ventures have a good chance of success. The general area that best meets these criteria is Sunshine, at the intersection of the Parks and Spur Roads. This site has the advantage of drawing traffic going to and from Talkeetna, and also is located at a convenient stopping point for travelers journeying up and down the Parks Highway.

The town center will have an inner and outer area. The pedestrian core inner circle, roughly 1 mile square, takes in the land immediately surrounding the actual “Y” intersection. The outer ring extends an additional mile (approximately) north and south, and to the bridge over the Big Susitna River on the west. The two areas together need to be large enough to meet community commercial needs for the foreseeable future. Specific boundaries for the town center will need to be refined after further discussions with affected landowners.

## **TOWN CENTER - PEDESTRIAN CORE**

### **Land Uses**

#### *Encouraged Uses:*

- Commercial: primarily local serving commercial uses. Uses most desired include “Main Street” commercial uses such as a bank, grocery, restaurants, bakery, book store, personal service (barber, hair salon), gas stations, repairs, arts and crafts/gift stores, hotels/motels. Secondary commercial uses include regional and visitor serving uses, such as specialty shops and restaurants.
- Public uses: for example, a library, post office, (the area already hosts the school and the senior center), space for a farmers market.
- Residential: single family and multifamily housing – encourage relatively high densities (including apartments and townhouses, up to approx 15 units per acre).

#### *Discouraged Uses:*

- Uses that disrupt opportunities to create a pedestrian-oriented commercial district. Uses that deaden a town center include large parcels devoted to a single function, e.g., large scale industrial activities, auto sales, storage, junkyards, big box retail stores.

## **Development Standards Specific to this District**

- Building heights and densities – allow buildings of greater density and height than in other parts of the Y Community Council Area; allow multifamily attached housing.
- Parking – require on-site parking, but give option to meet this requirement by contributing a modest fee to help cover annual maintenance costs of public off-site parking. Create an attractive, inviting environment for walking - screen parking areas, break-up large parking areas with planting, use on street parking.
- Landscaping – require attractive landscaping, do not require retention of a vegetative buffer in front of buildings.
- Utilities and Services – require screening of dumpsters, service bays, similar building features.
- Building Size/footprint – encourage smaller, human scale buildings; break large buildings into smaller, human scale components rather than constructing large monolithic structures.
- Setbacks – encourage buildings to locate relatively close to the street, to create a sense of enclosure, and provide views into store fronts from the sidewalk.
- Streetscape – encourage actions to create a good walking environment - require sidewalks, planting between street and building, on street parking.

## **TOWN CENTER – OTHER COMMERCIAL/OUTER RING**

### **Land Uses**

#### *Encouraged Uses:*

- Commercial & Light Industrial: variety of commercial uses, including all those listed for the pedestrian core, plus larger scale industrial and commercial activities – larger grocery stores, construction equipment storage, manufacturing, etc.
- Public Uses: for example, a library, post office, (the area already hosts the school and the senior center)
- Residential: single family and multifamily housing – encourage relatively high densities (including apartments and townhouses, up to approx 15 units acre).

Note: this area is intended to provide a combination of commercial, industrial and residential uses. More detailed planning will be needed, during the preparation of the Special Use District implementing this plan, to ensure these uses are compatible.

### **Development Standards Specific to this District**

- Allow buildings of greater density and height than in other parts of the YCC Area; allow multifamily attached housing.
- Encourage attractive buildings, landscaping.
- Require on-site parking.
- Require a buffer zone between larger scale industrial/commercial uses and residential areas.

## 2. LAND ALONG PARKS HIGHWAY AND SPUR ROAD

### Overall Objective

As stated earlier in this chapter, the community wants to avoid commercial sprawl along the Parks Highway and Spur Road. This is a legitimate concern, due to the area's potential for growth, and the long stretches of private land adjoining the highway.

See Goal 2, earlier in this chapter, for a more complete description of objectives for this district.

### Boundaries

The Parks Highway and Spur Road land use district include land on either side of the road along the length of these two stretches of highway. This excludes the town center and Sheep Creek commercial areas. The land use district map gives a preliminary, approximate boundary; specific boundaries will be determined during preparation of a future Special Use District.

### Land Uses

#### *Encouraged Uses*

- Residential uses – low densities (like other YCC Area residential areas).
- Recreation – establish and maintain trails along both sides of the road. Small scale tourist accommodations – cabins, B&B's
- Home-based businesses; residential-compatible commercial & resource development (as defined in rural residential district)
- Other uses, other than commercial or industrial, that maintain the predominately rural feel of land along the highway

Generally the community does not encourage large scale commercial uses along these highways. The community encourages future commercial development, particularly larger scale commercial development, to locate in the Sunshine town center and Caswell/Sheep Creek commercial areas. The primary mechanism to achieve this latter goal is to recommend public investments concentrate in these areas, including improvements in access, infrastructure such as water and sewer, and community facilities. These public improvements will create incentives for private developers to focus future commercial development in these areas.

#### *Discouraged Uses:*

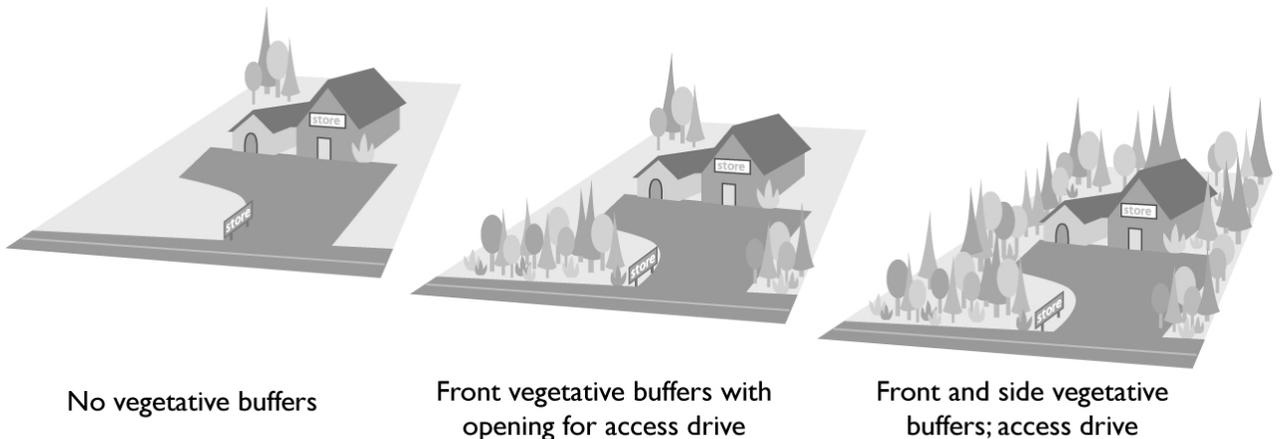
- Heavy industrial development, resource development such as large scale gravel extraction.
- Adult entertainment, bars, liquor stores.

## Development Standards Specific to this District

- Road Design – Work with the AK DOT/PF to minimize the number of curb cuts along the highway. Commercial development is encouraged in the town center area. Where there is road side development, steps should be taken to consolidate access, for example, through shared drives, separate access roads, or frontage roads.
- Setbacks – Rely on existing MSB setbacks (25' front, 10' side)
- Buffers – Require retention of natural vegetation and/or planting of new vegetation between the road and adjoining buildings, and encourage retention of vegetation along side lot boundaries. Allow openings in buffers for commercial uses to permit views into businesses, as well as access drives. Work with AK DOT/PF to provide plantings in the unused portions of the highway right-of-way.

Buffers should be of sufficient width to give the impression to drivers that they are passing through a forested or rural landscape, punctuated by buildings (vs. Wasilla, which is now a cleared landscape, with occasional trees). Buffers should be consistent with Firewise landscaping standards for defensible space around structures. Agricultural activities (greenhouses, gardens, etc). should be considered acceptable ways to meet buffering goals, consistent with the rural character of the area. More extensive buffers are needed for larger buildings, and for more visible uses, e.g. gravel operations.

**Figure 5: Buffers**



- Signage – Sign size, materials, lighting, etc. should be controlled to keep the highway attractive. At the same time, it is recognized that businesses need sufficient signage to attract customers. Options to achieve this balance point include, for example, using one sign for several businesses, and controls on sign size and materials. One of the positive benefits of sign controls is avoiding “sign wars” – where merchants invest in ever bigger signs to stay ahead of the competition. One part of this effort will involve working with the AK DOT/PF to find ways for businesses to advertise close enough to the active roadway to be visible to drivers.

### **3. RURAL RESIDENTIAL AREAS**

#### **Overall Objectives**

Work to keep the YCC Area a largely rural residential community, with a predominance of open space and natural landscapes; maintain the existing pattern with relatively low density residential and agricultural uses. Protect environmental quality, particularly the quality of surface and subsurface water used for domestic purposes. Encourage continuation of agriculture and timber operations at a scale that helps support and maintain the area's rural lifestyles. Allow agriculture and timber-harvesting, and limited, home-based commercial uses as part of residential uses where this can be done without adversely impacting adjoining properties.

#### **Boundaries**

This district includes all of the YCC Area, except the town center, land along highways and along major rivers and streams, and mountains.

#### **Land Uses**

##### *Encouraged Uses:*

- Primarily a rural residential area; future residential densities comparable to densities in portions of area already subdivided and developed.
- Residential-compatible commercial uses – Home-based/“cottage industry” businesses are incidental and accessory to the primary residential use, and allowed as long as the use does not adversely impact neighboring homes. The intent of this category is to support small scale commercial activities such as craft production or furniture building that can be done within the confines of a typical residential property without creating off-site impacts. This policy allows, for example, a wood-working business to run a shop and if necessary to expand their business on their site. The defining feature of this category is that the use fits well into a residential neighborhood without reducing visual quality, creating significant traffic, or otherwise disrupting the sense of peace and quiet residents expect in these areas.

The final definition of home-based/cottage industry will be worked out during the development of a Special Use District implementing this plan.

- Non-home-based commercial uses may be allowed (conditionally allowed under a future Special Use District) if they are small scale, if designed to not affect adjoining residents or property values, or to generate notable vehicular traffic. Examples of residential-compatible commercial uses include child care, furniture manufacturing, tour businesses, media productions, lodges, recreation rentals (e.g., canoe rentals), and greenhouses.
- Resource-based activities – agriculture, farming, stables, jelly & honey manufacturing, lumber milling or small scale logging is permitted, if operations are designed to follow traditional area practices to not unreasonably impact neighboring residential uses (e.g. through appropriate limits on operation hours, noise, smells, etc. – see Goal 4).

- Neighborhood Commercial – small scale, local serving commercial, such as a convenience store, small restaurant or video rental are allowed uses under certain conditions in rural residential areas. The goal is to provide the option for a concentrated nodes of commercial development in more densely developed neighborhoods, such as Caswell, so residents don't necessarily have to drive to commercial facilities on the Parks Highway

*Discouraged Uses:*

- Commercial and industrial activity, other than as outlined above, is discouraged in residential areas.
- Adult entertainment, bars, liquor stores.

**Development Standards Specific to this District (see previous section for standards applying in all districts)**

- Density – Detailed standards for residential densities will be established in a Special Use District that will implement this plan. General guidelines for preferred densities are listed below:
  - Set minimum residential densities at a level that maintains the existing rural character of the area, roughly comparable to the densities found over the majority of subdivided private lands the YCC Area at the time of comprehensive plan adoption – about 2 acres/unit.
  - Provide the option for cluster or “open space subdivision” rules, which allow individual lots to be 1 acre per unit (or less if served by community water in sewer), if in exchange, valuable open space is reserved for trails, protection of land along rivers and streams, environmental protection or similar public benefits, and if the average density for the property as a whole (including open space) is about 2 acres.
- Minimum building setbacks; setbacks from water bodies – During the preparation of a future SpUD, consider requiring setbacks larger than Borough-wide minimums (25' front, 10' rear and side) for parcels greater than 5 acres.
- Subdivision practices – Developers should retain trails, and buffers to protect streams, wetlands and other sensitive open space areas. The open space subdivision approach presented earlier in this chapter provides an approach to meeting this standard. Developers must improve and or construct roads (within and accessing the planned subdivision) to Borough standards as a condition of subdivision approval.
- Timber and Agricultural Practices – All timber and agricultural projects should develop and follow conservation plans prepared with the assistance of the local Soil Conservation Subdistrict.

## **4. LAND ALONG MAJOR RIVERS & STREAMS**

### **Overall Objectives**

Significant portions of the non-mountainous area of the YCC Area are private and native corporation lands or lands held by institutional owners such as the University of Alaska. Over time, most of this private land will likely be developed. As a result, the community wants to find a way to establish some areas that will be undeveloped or at least minimally developed, so in the future the community will still have a sense of rural life and access to recreation.

The most promising option to retain the open space is to focus on the paths of the area's major east-west flowing drainages. The majority of the State and Borough lands where it exists along these streams and rivers will be maintained in public ownership, to protect open space, recreation, habitat and water quality values.

Where these streams and rivers cross lands held by individual private and institutional land owners it is also important to retain open space, habitat and environmental values. Policies are needed that find a balance between the community benefits of maintaining these areas in a largely natural state and the desires of private land owners for use of their land.

The open space and recreation chapter gives more details on these policies.

### **Boundaries**

Boundaries include land along the Kashwitna River, and Caswell, Sheep, Goose, Montana, and Sunshine Creeks. Where the streams adjoin land in private ownership, the land use district map gives a preliminary, approximate boundary. Where the rivers or streams cross through public land (State, Borough), boundaries are expanded to include most or all of this property. Specific boundaries will be determined as part of a future Special Use Districts.

### **Land Uses**

#### *Encouraged Uses:*

- Residential – Low density
- Recreation-oriented commercial (e.g., lodging) allowed conditionally
- Agriculture – With adequate setbacks and other conservation practices

#### *Discouraged Uses*

- Commercial
- Industrial

### **Development Standards**

Standards presented in this section are now presented in the recreation/open space chapter, under goal 1, Strategy D.

## **5. MOUNTAINS**

### **Overall Objectives**

The upland, mountainous portion of YCC Area is largely held by the State of Alaska. The State Department of Natural Resources' Susitna Area Plan sets out policies for the use of these areas. This area is intended to be retained in public ownership; managed for a range of public uses including recreation, mining, subsistence, and fish and wildlife. The website below gives details:

<http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/mlw/planning/areaplans>

Current uses in the area are primarily recreational activities, including hiking, snow machining, and hunting.

### **Boundaries**

Upland and mountainous areas east of the edge of private land holdings.

### **Land Uses**

#### *Encouraged Uses:*

- Recreation, open space, habitat protection are the primary uses.
- Hunting, trapping, fishing and related subsistence uses.
- Protection of watershed values – the headwaters of all the creeks crossing through the Y Area
- Resource development such as mining is permitted under regulations established by the State of Alaska.

#### *Discouraged Uses:*

- Residential is discouraged, other than those properties already subdivided and designated for residential use.
- New subdivisions; commercial, industrial -- prohibited.

### **Development Standards**

- Ensure strict standards are followed so any potential impacts of mining on water quality or other environmental issues are minimized.

## MAJOR GOALS & STRATEGIES

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### Open Space & Recreation

*“I really like that I can hook up my dogs and run out the Deshka River 50 miles just for the fun of it.”*

*“I don’t want to be riding across private property, but I need a way to access the backcountry on my snow machine. We have to figure out a way to keep the peace and respect each other, and still enjoy why we live here.”*

*“I like how quiet it is here, and so great for the kids.”*

#### Overview

The YCC Area Gathering and the first YCC Area Community Workshop made clear that the natural attractiveness and recreational character of the area – its lakes, creeks and rivers, fish and wildlife, open space, trails, quiet and sense of solitude – are the primary reasons people choose to live in this community.<sup>1</sup> It is important to YCC Area residents that they retain a strong sense of living in a natural, rural setting, with good access to the outdoors. It is also clear the area has a diversity of recreation and open space use opportunities. People depend on open space and natural areas for many reasons, both for work and play. In short, high-quality, well-preserved recreation and open space areas are major components of the quality of life YCC Area residents want and need.



Without planning, these qualities will tend to be eroded and use conflicts intensify, as more land is developed and more people move into the area. This plan takes into consideration the value of recreation and open space to the community, and is designed to sustain these qualities in the near and long term.

The goals below are derived from the opinions on recreation and open space issues voiced by the community during the planning process. Under the guidance of the YCC planning team, the plan further interprets these goals with more specific recommendations and guidelines for implementation.

A fundamental challenge facing the YCC Area is that a significant portion of available recreation and open space land is in private ownership, and is likely to be developed over time. Retaining open space values will therefore be best effected on two fronts – by outlining standards to maintain open space values on private land, and by retaining most of those public lands that do exist in public ownership. This section includes strategies to accomplish both these goals.

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<sup>1</sup> Gathering, Spring, 2003; Comp Plan Workshop, Spring, 2004.

## **Recreation & Open Space Goals**

The goals below are directed toward initiating and maintaining a system for recreation and open space that is area-wide, sustainable and meets the community goals set forth in this process. The overall intent of the community is generally to better manage and accommodate current levels of recreation and open space use, rather than actively promote additional new uses.

- 1. Reserve, protect and expand access to natural features and open space.**
- 2. Meet the needs of diverse uses and users.**
- 3. Retain, dedicate and improve trails system.**
- 4. Establish system of parks, recreation facilities and open space.**
- 5. Create sustainable management practices.**

# GOAL I Reserve, protect and expand access to natural features and open space.

## BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES

One of the main pleasures of living in the YCC Area comes from residents’ proximity to undeveloped open space. Houses sit in a largely intact natural landscape, typically in forested areas, often with views of wetlands, mountains, lakes and streams. Unlike life in typical cities or suburbs, most people don’t have to leave their homes to be in an attractive natural setting. The natural open space is large in quantity, and is highly valued.

Meeting this goal for public open space entails taking direct action to protect and enhance access to natural features. Part of the planning process entailed distinguishing specifically which features and uses are priorities for residents, and then to formulating methods for their protection. With feedback from the community and other interested parties, important features and uses were identified, and are listed in the table below.

**Table 12: Uses and Values of Recreation and Open Space in the YCC Area.**

Feature	Community Values	Important Summer Uses	Important Winter Uses
Rivers, streams and creeks	Open space, wildlife habitat, water source, contribution to rural character	Fishing, rafting, canoeing, hiking	Skiing, walking, running, snow machining, trapping
Lakes	Open space, wildlife habitat, water source, contribution to rural character	Fishing, boating, waterskiing, swimming, float plane port (not all lakes allow all uses)	Snow machining, skiing, ice fishing, skating, walking
Forests and wetlands	Open space, wildlife habitat, water source, contribution to rural character	Walking, hiking, running, biking, horseback riding, four-wheeling	Skiing, walking, running, snow machining, sledding, horseback riding
Talkeetna Mountains and “Backcountry” Open Space	Open space, wildlife habitat, water source, contribution to rural character	Walking, hiking, running, biking, horseback riding, four-wheeling	Skiing, walking, running, snow machining, sledding, horseback riding
Views of Denali and the Alaska Range	Aesthetic appreciation, community identity	Scenic viewing, rural character, possible visitor-related economic development.	Scenic viewing, rural character

## HOW? MEANS TO PROTECT NATURAL FEATURES & OPEN SPACE

### A. Reserve most remaining public lands for use as recreation and open space.

The public land that does exist in the YCC Area must be considered for recreation and open space uses before being designated to other purposes (for location of remaining public parcels, see Land Ownership Map in Land Use chapter). There are four main types of public lands in the YCC Area – State land (mostly in the eastern section of the community, in the Talkeetna Mountains, but also including a number of parcels within the residential areas); State waters (larger lakes and streams, e.g., the Susitna River, are held in public ownership up to the average high water line), Borough lands (which include a mix of larger contiguous parcels and smaller parcels throughout the residential area); and isolated small parcels dedicated for public use as part of the subdivision process, typically held by a homeowners association or the MSB. In addition to these categories of public lands, there are a range of section line easements and other public and utility easements and rights of way in the area.

#### *State Lands*

The state land in the eastern portion of the YCC Area, managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has been designated as multi-use public land, to be retained in public ownership, and used for recreation, open space, habitat, mining, and grazing, [State Department of Natural Resources, Susitna Area Plan]. Reflecting community desires, this comprehensive plan identifies this area to remain as open space, in public ownership, to be used for a variety of recreational purposes.

An additional benefit of this land to the community, aside from its recreational uses, is its value as a watershed, and a source for clean water runoff. Since many homes in the YCC Area use wells as a primary source of drinking water, good drainage and clean groundwater is essential for residents.

Hunting and trail activities are primary uses in this area. Currently, there are no facilities or active recreation management in this area. Growing use over the next 5-10 years may necessitate changes in management, including more active trail management.

Other state parcels are within the residential areas. These lands remain in state ownership largely because they are wetland areas, unsuited for development, and were passed over when the Borough, native corporations and other groups had the chance to select their entitlement from the state. Of particular importance for recreation and open space uses are state parcels through which creeks flow. Designation of part or all of these parcels for open space and recreation is important for implementing a “waterways greenbelt” along certain creeks (see also Section B., below).

The Department of Natural Resources “Susitna Area Plan” generally designates these lands to be retained in public ownership, and managed for recreation and open space values. See the YCC Area Land Use Map to for recreation-designated State lands.<sup>2</sup>

#### *MSB Lands*

MSB owned land is scattered throughout the YCC Area. In general, the position of the plan is that there is very little borough land in the area to meet long term community needs for parks, and sites

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on specific state land use designations in the YCC Area, please see the Susitna Area Plan, available through the Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

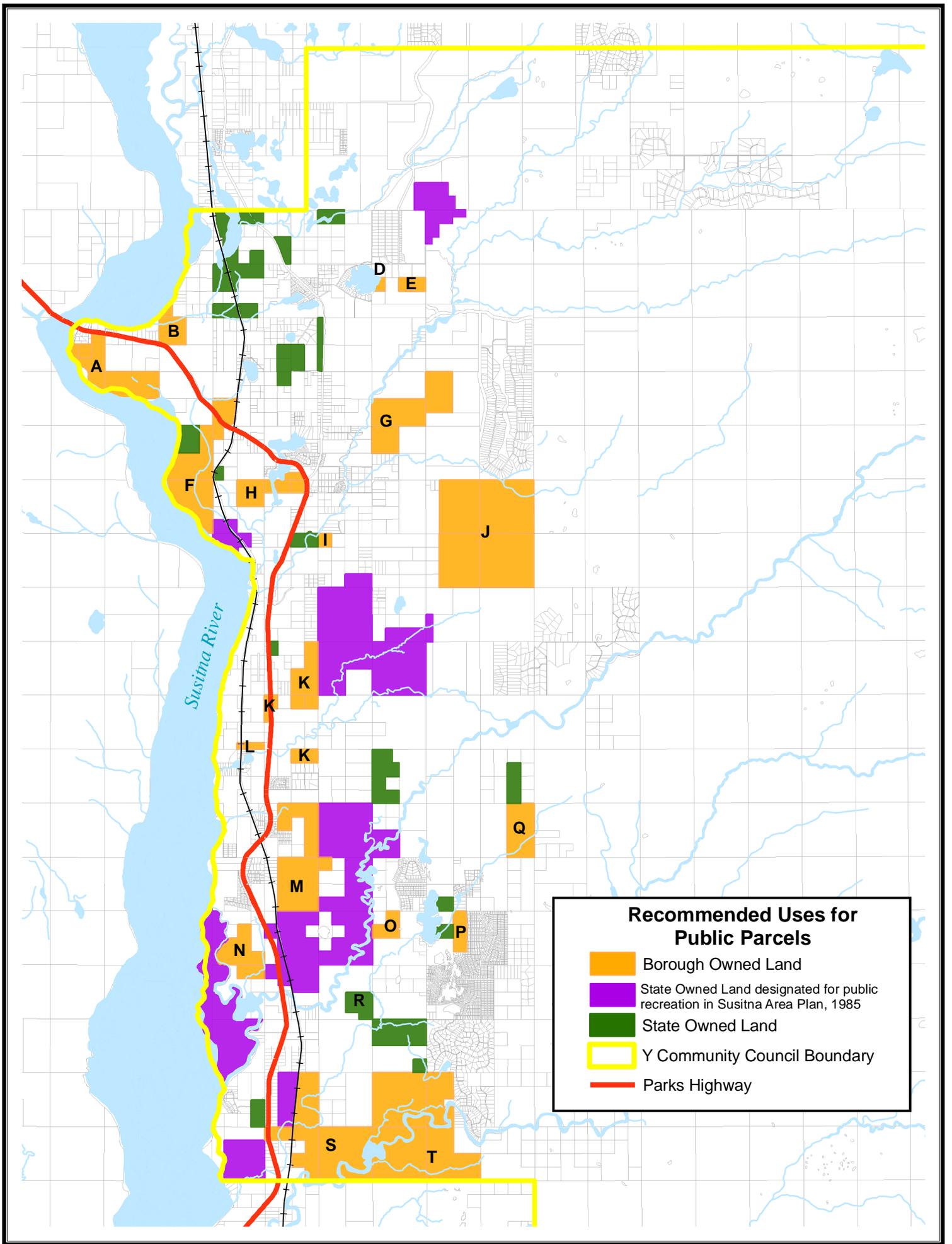
for schools and other public facilities, and therefore the large majority of MSB parcels should be retained in public ownership and managed for public uses. It is recognized, however that the borough needs to sell portions of its holdings in the area, to provide revenue from land sales and property taxes. Parcels with the least compelling public values are identified as possible site for land sales. Land disposals shall be done consistent with the policies of this plan, and with the review and input of the Y Community Council. This plan recommends outlying lands (e.g., parcels G, J & Q) not be sold in the near term, as this would trigger the need to spend money for new or expanded roads, when funds for such improvements can be better spent improving roads serving existing residential areas. Lands identified for possible future disposal should be managed for open space and recreational uses until they may be disposed.

Uses for MSB parcels are outlined in the table below. Once the plan is adopted, the Y Community Council, in partnership with the MSB, should formally designate these lands for these uses.

**Table 13: Recommended Uses for Specific MSB Parcels.**

Parcel	Description	Use Designation
A.	Parcel adjacent to Susitna River	Agricultural lands, retain a useable recreational access easement along the river, at least 300'. MSB has interest in gravel on this site.
B.	Parcel adjacent to Susitna River, encompassing Sunshine Creek	Currently used as a riverfront park. Retain land to continue this use with potential to develop more recreational facilities, especially in the vicinity of the old landfill site. A portion of this parcel also may be appropriate for a community cemetery.
D.	On Benka Lake	Retain as lakefront park (existing) with potential to develop more recreational facilities.
E.	North of Yoder Road	Available for land disposal, or use for future neighborhood park.
F.	Parcel abutting Susitna River, encompassing Sunshine Creek	Retain as open space and watershed; keep open possibility to use parcels for bypass. MSB has interest in gravel on this site.
G.	Parcels adjoining Montana Creek	Retain as part of Montana Creek stream area, designate for open space & watershed. Eastern portion may be possible land disposal.
H. (2 parts)	Western – YMCA Camp (leased) Eastern – School site	Retain for current uses. School site can be developed further for community recreation/trail system, and to provide a small community park related to the town center.
I.	Parcel adjoining Montana Creek	Retain for undeveloped open space and watershed.
J.	Large parcel south of Bartlett Hills subdivision, adjoining state lands to East	In near term – retain as public land, use for forestry and open space; in longer term, use for a combination of neighborhood open space, disposal for agricultural uses and residential uses. Large portions of this site are poorly drained wetlands.
K. (3 parcels)	Parcels on either side of the Goose Creek stream area	Retain two eastern parcels as part of Goose Creek stream area, and the system of wetlands adjoining Goose Creek. Parcel straddling the Parks Highway could be used for disposal, although this parcel is

		poorly drained and has low physical capability for development.
L.	Parcel east of the railroad and west of the Parks Highway, north of Goose Creek	Retain for community open space and recreation use, including option on portions of the site for developed recreation facilities.
M.	Parcels between Sheep and Goose creek, near on-grade crossing	Retain as part of Sheep Creek stream area.
N.	Parcels west of Parks Highway and north of Sheep Creek	Retain & protect land near the stream for open space, recreation and watershed values; provides a possible staging area for trail use west across the Big Susitna River. Areas not important for recreation and open space uses are candidates for land disposal.
O. & P.	Parcels within Caswell Lakes neighborhood	Retain for future community facilities related to the Caswell Lakes neighborhood (school, park, etc.). Much of the land at these two sites is wet and offers good wildlife habitat.
Q.	Parcel along Caswell Creek stream area	Retain land adjoining Caswell Creek for neighborhood open space as part of the stream greenbelt stream area; in future remainder of parcel is a candidate for land disposal.
R. & S.	Parcels adjoining Kashwitna Creek	Retain large majority of these parcels as part of the Kashwitna Creek stream area to be used as open space, habitat and recreation. Most of this land is wetland, recreation use in these areas will primary primarily be for winter activities. Several small portions of the site with better drainage may be used for public facilities such as a school related to Caswell Creek.



**B. Protect and enhance uses of rivers, streams, creeks and lakes – for fishing, open space, clean water and other recreational purposes.**

*Rivers, Streams and Creeks*

One of the most valuable and best-loved natural aspects of the YCC Area is the system of creeks that transect the land. These creeks supply natural corridors for wildlife movement, host strong salmon runs, are part of a healthy, clean water system for the area, and are used for many types of recreation and subsistence activities. There are seven significant creeks in the area which run a northeast-to-southwesterly route, six originate in the highlands of the Talkeetna Mountains, descend through forests and wetlands, and finally flow into the Susitna River, bordering the western edge of the YCC Area. The seventh, Sunshine Creek, starts in the wetlands and lakes just north of the Sunshine, and meanders south into the Susitna River.

The Recreational Fishing Data Map shows “angler days” information based on surveys by the State Department of Fish and Game. As the data indicates, fishing pressure is substantial, and growing. These streams are increasingly seen as attractive alternatives, especially for Alaska residents, to the even more crowded salmon streams on the Kenai Peninsula.

This plan calls for a system of “waterway stream areas” to be protected along creeks and rivers. It is the intent of this plan to protect the entire watershed, from the upper reaches of the stream systems, in the mountains east of the settled areas of the Y community, and extending down the main channels of the streams and rivers, as well as lowland tributaries and associated wetlands.

The Land Use chapter identifies stream area land use districts to help achieve this goal. These areas serve a variety of functions, including:

- Preservation of valuable open space, which contributes to rural character.
- Preservation of corridors for wildlife movement.
- Protection of clean water.
- Protection of fish populations and enhancement of fishing opportunities.
- The possibility to create and/or enhance trails connecting residential areas to “backcountry” open space (where public lands make this possible).
- The possibility of upgrading fishing access in special areas – both for improved access and to protect the surrounding area from overuse.

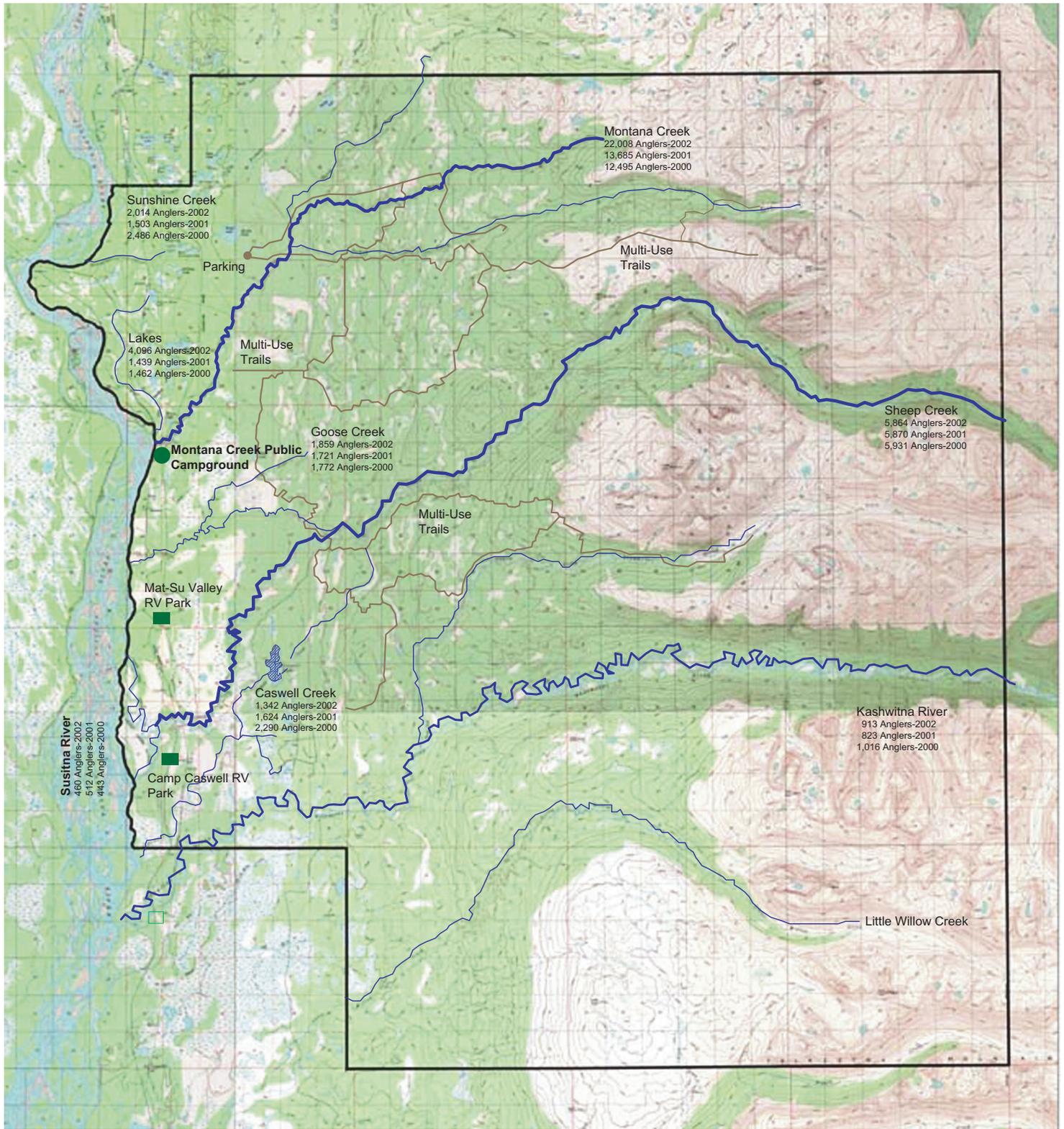
This last point is particularly important in considering trails; these waterway stream areas could become one key element of an area-wide trails system. It is important to note, however, that “stream area” is not synonymous with “trail.” Much of the land along these streams is private. While residents may endorse policies to retain stream-side vegetation, setback requirements and other actions protect open spaces values, many will not want public trails adjoining the streams.

*Lakes*

Lakes dot the entire YCC Area, scattered in the lowlands between the Susitna River and the foothills of the Talkeetnas. Many of the YCC Area’s neighborhoods are built around lakes, and waterfront property with good lake access is highly valued. Residents use lakes for a range of recreational purposes, including swimming, fishing, skating, snow machining, dog mushing, skiing, and boating. Hiking and walking trails, and picnic and beach areas exist at some lakes, as well. Lakes promote neighborly relations, as places for residents to gather. YCC Area lakes should be preserved for these

purposes, putting lake management plans in place as needed and desired by adjoining residents. Improving lake access and promoting responsible lake use is a priority. Access the quality of life of residents who don't reside directly on the water, and adds value to surrounding real estate. Fortunately for residents, public access to many lakes has been retained by the State or Borough.

# Recreational Fishing Data



Existing public lake access points need improvement throughout the YCC Area. The Recreational Fishing Data Map shows some (but not all) of these access points. Steps to improve public access to lakes include:

- Retaining lake front public land in public ownership.
- Identifying public access points with small, attractive signage, including rules for responsible use of these sites.
- Improving small-craft launches and lake-access trails, where they currently exist.
- Improving parking areas, where they currently exist, but keeping them small in size to limit over-use.
- Creating a system for managing recreation use, with moderate, community-supported management measures, e.g. emptying trash cans or reducing vandalism. Regular use by local residents is one of the most powerful ways to discourage inappropriate behavior.

A number of lakes in the YCC Area have special uses; a partial list of locations where it is important to preserve and enhance these values includes:

- **Upper Caswell Lake** - Beach park, skate area.
- **Myrtle's Pond** - Fishing and picnicking area.

### **C. Water quality, open space, and habitat values in key wetland/watershed/forested areas.**

Some of the land in the YCC Area is muskeg – which generally means relatively poor conditions for building, due to wet soils and poor drainage. At the same time, this land is very important for recharging aquifers, for providing open space that helps sustain the area's rural character, and providing habitat to moose, birds and other species. Strategies for maintaining lands as open space for water quality purposes fit well with plans for stream areas and other recreational purposes, while minimally affecting opportunities for development.

Additionally, there are many forested areas which supply timber, pleasant recreational areas and wildlife habitat which should be identified and preserved. It is important to residents that these areas not be limited to the eastern portion of the YCC Area, but that some are preserved within the more densely populated zones.

Where these wetland and forested areas are currently in public ownership, they should remain public and be managed to protect wetland, watershed and open space values. Where these lands are privately held, the range of actions outlined on the following page should be followed.

Several residents were interested in having better information about wildlife habitat as part of the YCC Area Parks & Trails Plan, so that an appropriate amount of land could be reserved in good locations to protect valued wildlife habitat. Residents felt that not enough data was available during this planning process to assess critical wildlife habitat areas. Unless there are revisions to the Comprehensive Plan at this stage, no specific areas are identified as wildlife habitat, though some provisions for this type of use are made in the Susitna Area Plan – mostly in the eastern portion of the YCC Area.

### **D. Protect watershed, habitat and other open space values on private land.**

Reaching the community's goal of retaining watershed, habitat and open space and recreation values requires consideration of how these might be retained on private land. This is a particular issue

along key rivers and streams, and in wetland/aquifer recharge areas. Some of the benefits of reaching these goals are listed below.

- Help keep YCC Area’s rural character.
- Help preserve wildlife corridors and protect fish runs.
- Enhance water-based recreational opportunities, such as fishing and boating.
- Help preserve water quality.
- If the greenbelts included a trail, improve recreational and circulation opportunities.

Strategies to achieve these objectives are presented below:

- Encourage use of MSB-adopted voluntary “best management practices” for development around waterbodies.
- During a future community-driven Special Use District (SpUD) process consider revising and expanding MSB setback requirements - Currently the MSB retains a 75’ setback from creeks and rivers which prohibits the construction of “habitable dwellings” within the setback. Structures such as garages, docks, and other outbuildings can be built within the setback. During the SpUD process, determine if more stringent development guidelines for use within the setback are desirable.
- Use the “open space” subdivision process to reserve key portions of riverfront lands for environmental values or trails when larger parcels are subdivided.
- Encourage larger lot sizes along rivers and streams. Lower densities will help preserve rural character, and protect water quality and habitat values, and help maintain a route for animals moving east-west through the area. Allow higher density development under the provisions of the open space subdivision rules if the development creates a protected greenbelt at the edge of the stream; allow further density bonuses if the open space subdivision creates new public access. Details of this policy can be developed through a community-driven SPUD.
- During a future community-driven Special Use District (SpUD) process, establish land use policies limiting development in natural hazard areas (e.g., floodplains) or sensitive environmental areas (e.g., key watersheds, wetlands). Development in floodplains must meet national standards to get flood insurance, which is often required by financial institutions.
- Support establishment of a local land trust or land bank to purchase and/or hold easements or key parcels along the river.
- Support tax-incentives for private landowners to grant trail easements along the river and/or to keep the riverfront undeveloped.
- Request funds from the MSB, State or other agencies to purchase parcels for public use.
- The community hopes that, over time, opportunities for public access to rivers and streams will improve. However, the plan recognizes and supports the rights of private property owners, and does not recommend that private property be opened to public use without the support of the affected land owner.

### **E. Preserve and enhance views of Denali, the Alaska Range and the Talkeetna Mountains**

As one resident put it, “Every time I see Denali, I feel how special this place is.” Views of the YCC Area’s surrounding mountains are part of the identity of the place. Protecting and enhancing viewsheds protects and enhances the community character.

Steps to accomplish this goal will begin by conducting a “viewshed analysis” – using community input, existing GIS data or new LIDAR/coverage data. This analysis will identify viewpoints and viewsheds of particular value to residents and visitors. The locations where Denali is clearly visible from the Parks Highway is one example. After these areas are identified, methods for preservation and enhancement will include:

- Limitations on building heights and signage in designated viewshed areas.
- Brush/tree-clearing in select areas to create/enlarge views.
- Way-side pull-offs and viewpoints designated and built as part of Parks Highway Plan (see Circulation chapter).
- Scenic or Historic Byway designation (see Circulation chapter).
- Strategic location of picnic areas, camping grounds and parks to take advantage of good views. Retain these in public ownership.

## **GOAL 2** Meet the needs of diverse uses and users.

### **BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES**

Recreation and open space in the YCC Area is shared by many users. Generally, uses are compatible, but as more people move to and visit the area, open space becomes more of a premium and some of these uses conflict or are impacted by continued development. Additionally, some areas are under-served, and many desirable recreational facilities face funding challenges for design, construction, management and operation.



YCC Area residents agree that there are many benefits to retaining and using parks, trails and open space:

- Identity, aesthetic value and rural character  
( the YCC area is defined by its open land and scenic views; the ties between the natural features and the community can be strengthened through the Comprehensive Plan).
- Community-building  
(common use of gathering spaces: parks, ball fields, picnic areas, recreation centers, etc.).
- Access to outdoor activity, for recreation and to improve health  
(for hiking, dog mushing, skiing, snow machining, camping, biking, horseback riding, ATV touring, etc.).
- Access to wildlife and other subsistence resources  
(for viewing, fishing, hunting, trapping, firewood gathering, berry-picking, etc.).
- Economic development  
(recreation- and tourism-related business, visitor spending, increased property values, subsistence needs, resource extraction – discussed in Economic Development chapter).
- Environmental benefits  
(clean air, clean water, healthy ecosystems, etc.).
- Wild Places benefits  
(“Robert Service moments”): contact with untouched wilderness, unpeopled landscapes).

Currently, open space areas serve a variety user groups. Yet, in many ways, the area is probably being under-utilized. Understanding who user-groups are helps to define how to meet the general goal outlined at the first Comprehensive Plan Workshop – to maintain recreation resources for a variety of users.

Users often have slightly different needs. Occasionally these needs come into conflict – such as when snowmachiners from outside the YCC Area access state land from private driveways and

roads. This plan recommends methods for resolving such critical issues. Identifying and talking with distinct user groups during the planning process helped to ensure that the plan meets the broad needs of the entire community.

Users can be identified by their age, activity, place of residency, and other factors. Some of the user groups in the YCC Area who have special recreation and open space needs are:

- Children, youth and older residents.
- Indoor and outdoor recreators.
- Neighborhood residents and backcountry/wilderness travelers.
- Residents and visitors.
- Non-motorized and motorized travelers.
- Commercial and residential users.
- Transportation and recreational users.

Users and their needs are outlined in the table below.

**Table 14: User Groups and Their Recreation Needs**

User	Need	Recommendation
Children & Youth	Ability to navigate the community on safe trails and bikes; immediate access to places for safe, fun outdoor play	Neighborhood trails systems, neighborhood parks & open space; skate park and park lands adjoining the school
Motorized & Non-Motorized Users	Trails and areas where snowmachines/4-wheelers are segregated from non-motorized uses	Trails for skiing, walking, running, snow machining, dog mushing that are single-use only
Indoor Recreators	Four-season opportunities for health exercise	Community center housing indoor recreation facility
Residents	Neighborhood Recreational Areas	Local parks, community trail system
Visitors	Easy access to trails, fishing areas, rivers and parks that do not disturb local residents or trespass on private property	Well-marked trailheads with directional signage from the Parks Highway; area map distributed in local businesses; small parking areas
Commercial Recreation-Related Operations	Area to successfully operate small-scale tourism ventures, small group guided hikes, canoe trips, river floats	Pull-out/put-in areas for guided rafting trips; recreation attractions that would support B&B operators

## **HOW? MEANS TO PROVIDE SERVICES TO DIVERSE USERS GROUPS**

This comprehensive plan is intended to be the starting point for the community to establish a more complete, broadly beneficial recreation open space system. Actions are outlined below:

- A.** Continue to convene a recreation, trails and open space subcommittee of the Community Council. Contact user-groups to discuss specific recreation needs and interests. Work with the MSB and other agencies, organizations and landowners, such as the National Park Service, to raise recreation issues of concern to residents.
- B.** Meet with specific subdivisions/neighborhoods; carry out neighborhood work sessions to identify currently, locally-used trails and open space areas; identify different types of expected uses; identify parcels for potential neighborhood parks.
- C.** Identify areas where new, expanded or more restricted recreation and open space uses should be considered. Make specific recommendations about identified areas.
- D.** Use the outcome of these first three steps to add to and refine the recommendations of under the other goals this chapter, producing specific recommendations for retention/improvement of open space areas, neighborhood parks, or other recreation facilities; and new recreation and open space management strategies.
- E.** Engage the community to play a more active role in the maintenance of neighborhood and community scale recreation sites, e.g. lake access points, working with the State and Borough. Urge the community to conduct annual clean up days, and to take pride in the signs and upkeep of local parks.
- F.** Ensure that trails and park plans take into account needs of different uses.
- G.** Relate recreation and open space uses to goals established for Land Use, Economic Development, and Governance.

Some issues of particular significance to specific users in the YCC Area include those listed below. At this point most of these recommendations express general goals (e.g., safe trails for school kids). More work will be needed to identify the specific locations and actions that are needed to implement these recommendations.

### **A. Improving safe circulation for children.**

Provide trails in neighborhoods, especially to/from and around school. Make it possible for children to walk and bike off of the roads by instituting a roadside trail system in the neighborhoods within the road right-of-way.

### **B. Designating some sites for specific recreational uses.**

There is a growing problem in the Y area with motorized recreational activities crossing onto private lands, or using public roads. To respond to this issue, the plan proposes new infrastructure to direct users to appropriate access areas (see “D” below), and also, in this section, recommends development of specific use areas. Recommendations here are preliminary – the full, final set of specific use areas will require completion of the trails and recreation & open space master plans.

In areas that are especially valued for either motorized or non-motorized use, designate these areas as such. Include the dog-mushing race track at the northern end of the YCC Area. Motorized use

for most of the winter months should not be allowed in this area. On certain trails within neighborhood areas, such as ski or walking loops, only non-motorized activity should be allowed. For motorized users, easy access from neighborhoods into the backcountry open space must be ensured via trails that are safely separate from roadways and pedestrian areas. These designated motorized access points should be clearly identified. Representatives of various neighborhoods where these access issues occur should be able to assist in the development of a viable plan that considers resident and snowmachiner needs alike.

Preliminary review suggests that snowmachining traffic for out-of-town visitors should be directed to the area surrounding Sheep Creek Lodge. Public-use trails that allow snowmachiners to access the backcountry from this area are needed to make this work.

The dog-mushing loop in the Montana Creek area is a good candidate for non-motorized, dog-mushing use only.

Several residents recommended protecting neighborhood children by designating some trails for biking and walking use only, especially to the proposed site of the eventual elementary school near Caswell Lakes.

### **C. Allowing opportunities for small-scale commercial recreation.**

Allow development of small-scale, locally owned B&Bs, lodges, and local guiding operations, e.g., horseback rides, rafting, fishing (see Economic Development chapter).

### **D. Directing visitors to a few, good access points.**

To minimize impact, out-of-town recreators should be directed to specific, contained access points. These areas should be clearly marked and unobtrusive, allowing visitors to explore the public lands without impacting local ways of life. This is particularly important in instances of camping, fishing, and access to State lands and waters. If visitors do not have designated areas for these activities they frequently end up crossing private land, blocking local roads, leaving waste behind and generally disrupting resident uses. It is possible to direct and contain visitors without promoting increased visitation. This is the preferred policy of this plan. Further methods for implementation are discussed as part of the “Trails,” “Parks & Recreational Facilities,” and “Management” sections below.

### **E. Create an indoor recreation facility.**

Many residents have voiced strong interest and support for an indoor recreational facility during this planning process. An indoor facility will meet the needs of a variety of users who find that winter activity in Alaska is well supplemented by an indoor facility for certain types of exercise and socializing, especially for teenagers. For further details on these recommendations, see Goal 4 “Establish a System of Parks, Recreation Facilities and Open Space.”

## **GOAL 3 Retain, dedicate and improve trails system.**

### **BACKGROUND & COMMUNITY VALUES**

Traditional trails cross over much of the Mat-Su Borough, and provide a wide range of functional and recreational activities; from dog mushing to snow machining, skiing, hiking, biking, wood hauling, hunting and trapping. Many of these trails cross private land, and are being lost as land is developed. At the same time there is an increasing, related concern about trespass on private property by snow machines, hikers, hunters and other recreation users.

The MSB has hired a contractor to survey the YCC Area, map current trails, and then work with the community to identify and dedicate important public trails, including a multi-purpose north-south connector. Two trails between Willow Creek and the Kashwitna – the Central Trail and the Talkeetna Mail Trail – have already been dedicated by the state. The MSB’s contractor will be meeting further with the YCC Trails Committee, Planning Team and Community Council on trails issues in the coming months. The Comprehensive Plan can take advantage of and help direct this project.

Specific types of trail uses to be provided in the community include trails for summer and winter; for motorized and non-motorized use, and for recreation and utilitarian purposes. Specific types of trails include:

- Dog mushing trails
- Cross-Country ski trails
- Snowmachine & ATV trails
- Bike trails
- Horse trails
- Hunting, trapping trails
- Walking and hiking trails

### **HOW? MEANS TO CREATE A YCC AREA TRAILS SYSTEM**

#### **A. Prepare a trails master plan.**

The community should work with the MSB, the State, property owners, user groups and the general public to prepare a YCC master trails plan. Important steps towards creating such a plan are already underway, but more work is needed. While preserving trails is difficult today, it will only be harder in the future. This comprehensive plan sets the stage for developing a trails plan; specific recommendations and criteria to guide this process are outlined below. Ideally a trails master plan would be part of a larger Parks & Trails Master Plan for the entire area.

#### **B. Map existing trails.**

Start by reviewing the location and status of any existing, traditional trails, and the needs for trail improvements. The MSB is completing a Borough-wide review of traditional trails, and then working with communities to dedicate the most important trails for continuing, legal public use. The community should continue to work with the Borough to identify key traditional trails,

including preparing a map showing important existing trails and identifying the owners of land over which these trails cross.

### **C. Document community trail needs.**

YCC Area residents envision an integrated trail system for transport and open space connections. Workshops and discussions with the Community Planning team have identified the trail needs summarized below.

1. Preserve a North-South Trail just east of the Y's primary residential areas. Goals of this system include:
  - Serve as a connector for all of the YCC Area neighborhoods, and connect to east-west-running stream areas.
  - Provide a north-south route linking the YCC Area with Willow and communities to the south, and Talkeetna, and points south.
  - Allow access to State lands in the eastern portion of the YCC Area.
2. Create a series of east-west greenbelts along creeks and streams throughout the YCC Area, connecting the populated/road areas to the open state land to the east (see Goal 1, section B "Protect and Enhance Use of Rivers, Streams, Creeks and Lakes").
3. Provide access into State lands in the Talkeetna Mountains, in particular, establish trail heads and access points that funnel users away from private property and unsafe areas. Examples of areas needing access include from Yoder Road and Caswell Lakes area.
4. Provide ski loops and summer walking and bike trails for neighborhoods, e.g., around Caswell Lakes.
5. Provide residents a safe route out of the neighborhoods to schools, to shopping areas without crossing private land.
6. Reserve and plan options for road-side "Right-of-Way Trails." Locate trails next to existing and future roads, where public rights-of-way and funding for transportation improvements increase the odds of successfully developing community trails. One successful approach used in other portions of the MSB is to include a motorized dirt or gravel route on one side, and a paved bike path on the other.

This comprehensive plan offers an initial, but incomplete version of a community trails priorities, on the Recreation and Open Space Map. The community should continue to improve and refine this plan, consistent with community comprehensive plan objectives.

### **D. Document community needs for improved trail heads.**

Identify specific sites for improved trailheads (new or upgraded) that can offer convenient, safe public access, parking, trash receptacles and trail use information. Use the location of trail heads to direct trail use away from neighborhoods and private property. Areas where trails heads are most needed in the near term include:

- At one or two points along the edges of the Caswell Lakes neighborhood (particularly for snow machine access to State lands).
- From Yoder Road.

- At a few points along the Parks Highway, with trails along section lines to state lands or through waterway greenbelts.
- From the school.
- Create usable bridge crossings along waterway greenbelts.

#### **E. Reserve priority trail routes to serve as the backbone to a community trails system.**

After identifying the highest priority trails, take actions to secure and/or dedicate trail routes for public use; secure easements and rights of way, and reroute trails where needed. This process requires a patient, sustained effort. Key will be persuading institutional land owners such as the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, the University of Alaska, DNR, and CIRI, of the value of retaining trails at the time they sell land. Strategies to incrementally improve the trail system, often tied to other community projects, are outlined below:

1. Always consider trail needs in reviewing subdivisions, road improvements, or other actions that could affect or provide the chance to reserve public trail easements. Wherever possible include sufficient right-of-way width in new roads for future roadside trails.
2. Establish collector roads (See Circulation chapter) to funnel higher speeds and volumes of traffic off neighborhood roads, so these roads are safer for walking and biking.
3. Establish other new, often secondary trails: for example along section line easements, and where possible, utility easements.
4. As an element of the conservation plans of agricultural lands, timber harvest plans and the restoration of gravel pits.
5. Work with land owners who have traditional trails crossing their land to arrange plans that allow continued, conditional trail use. This approach has been successful in Willow, and resulted in an extensive community trail system.

#### **F. Construct and improve trails and trail heads.**

Resources for trail improvements and trailheads can come from a number of sources, including local volunteer labor, MSB bed tax grants, and as part of road construction projects.

#### **G. Drop Select Historic Trail Routes**

The historic Herning-Question Creek Trail, an established RS2477 trail, crosses through the Y Community. It is recommended that the state and borough explore vacating this trail from public records. Key to this decision will be determining if the need for this historic route has been met by more recent improvements, including the Parks Highway and Spur Roads.

#### **H. Trail System Summary: Highest priorities for near-term action.**

Of the actions and projects outlined in section, the highest priorities are listed below:

- Complete a community Trails & Recreation Master Plan.
- Where land ownership patterns allow, establish trails along east-west running streams and rivers.
- Develop a North-South Trail.

## **GOAL 4** Establish system of parks, recreation facilities & open space.

### **BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES**

Residents of the YCC Area want to preserve their quality of life through the planned retention of open space and by establishing an integrated parks system. Generally, residents have advocated for recreation spaces and facilities which promote a connection to the natural environment through both developed and undeveloped land.

The YCC Area has very limited developed recreation areas like parks and ball fields. Residents have expressed desires to have indoor recreational facilities, neighborhood parks and camping areas. One resident has commented “We need more spaces where kids can get on their bikes and go play.”

Others have discussed how recreational uses could be considered as a means of increasing the YCC Area’s tourism-related business. These uses should be considered by looking at the needs of the area as a whole, as well as the needs of smaller communities and neighborhoods.

Some of the facilities to consider are

- Ball fields and similar outdoor sports and recreation facilities (skating rink, track, basketball courts, etc.)
- Multi-purpose indoor recreation facilities (gym, basketball court, etc.)
- Motorized and non-motorized play areas (motocross or ATV/snowmachine trails; as well as trails for cross country skiing, mountain biking, hiking)
- Neighborhood parks; playgrounds including climbing structures, seating, sled hills
- Campgrounds, picnic areas and restrooms
- Water-access facilities (docks & launches)
- Open space areas (ski loops, walking paths, etc.)
- Scenic viewpoints
- “Special Places”



## HOW? – MEANS TO PROVIDE A COMMUNITY RECREATION SYSTEM

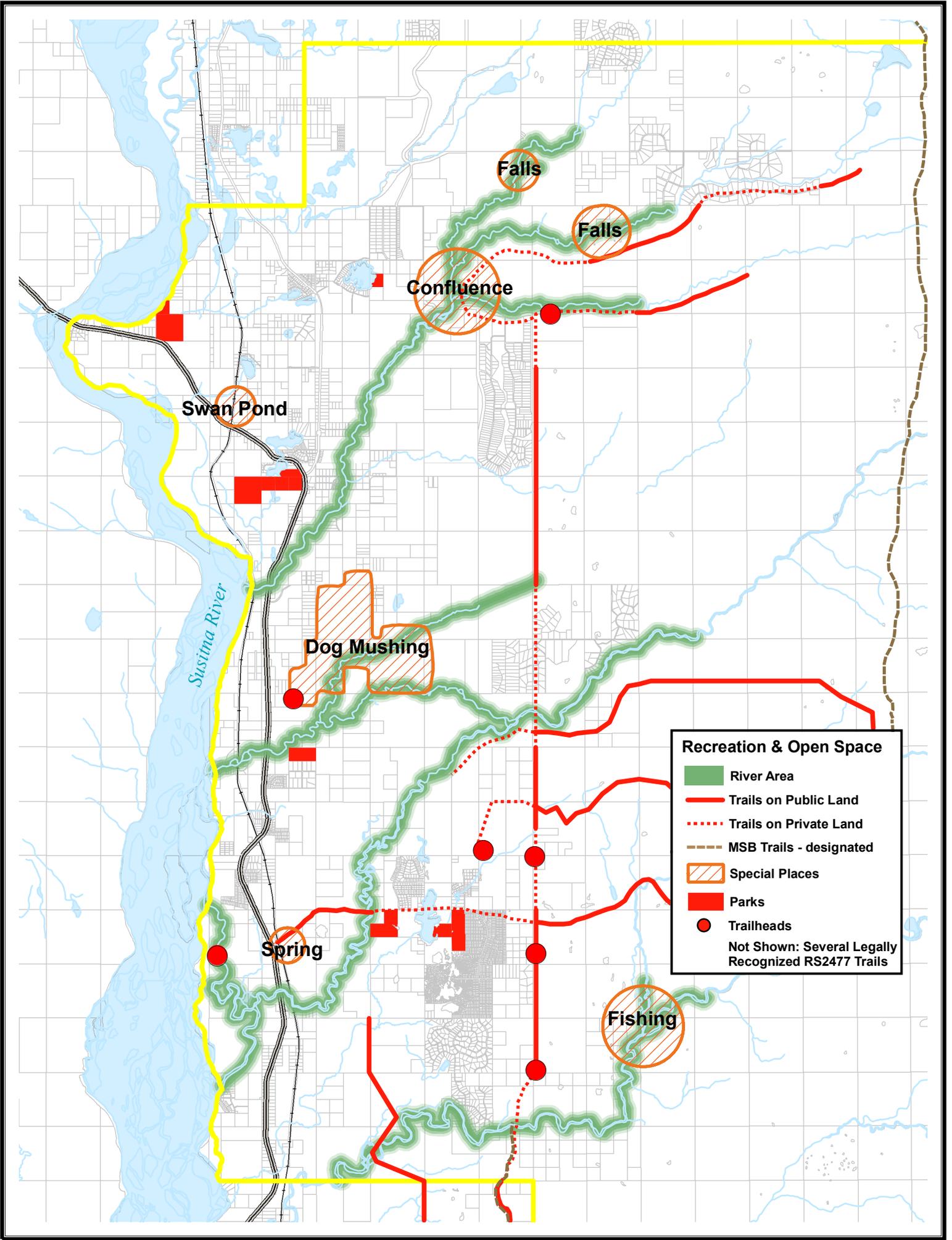
As is the case with trails, the comprehensive plan can take the first step in developing a community recreation system, but the full process will need to follow the completion of the comp plan. Objectives for the community recreation and open space system are listed below:

1. Prepare a recreation, facilities, parks and open space master plan, establishing guidelines for an area-wide park system, linking smaller neighborhood parks and recreation areas to community scale parks, open space and trails. This plan identifies several sites that can currently be identified as priorities for parks or other developed recreation facilities; additional work will be needed to identify other sites. Specific uses to be accommodated include:
  - Community center with indoor sports, work out space
  - Community Park with sports fields: including baseball and soccer fields, skate park, ice rinks, sled hills, etc.
  - Cross country ski area
  - ATV/Motocross area
  - Undeveloped open space recreation areas (for skiing, snow machining, mushing, etc.).
  - Better water and lake access including boat launches, parking, and camping areas.
2. Develop neighborhood park facilities at lake and creek access points, with picnic tables, play equipment. This will benefit local users, and create more activity in these areas to discourage vandalism.
3. Proceed with plans for a community building (see Land Use and Public Facilities chapters); include with this project indoor recreation areas, and outdoor sports facilities. Preferably develop this facility in the planned town center.
4. Reserve site for at least one large community park (40-80 acres); best options are at large MSB parcels.
5. Upgrade play equipment and sports fields at the school, so this can be a center for community recreation.
6. Work with the State and the MSB to establish a public day use area or campground, perhaps along Yoder Road?
7. Secure new sites for neighborhood parks and other recreation facilities, establish rules so these areas are dedicated and then managed as part of the subdivision process.
8. Identify scenic viewpoints (see Goal 1, section 5 “Protect and Enhance Views of Denali and the Alaska Range”).
9. Work with residents to determine the need for lake management plans.
10. Work with the state AK DOT/PF to identify areas along the roadways for pull-offs and other facilities.
11. Work with public and private entities to establish and develop public campgrounds along the roadway and in open space areas.
12. Identify “Special Places” (see Recreation and Open Space Map) and work to provide /maintain public access to these areas.

### **E. Park System Summary: Highest priorities for near-term action.**

Of the various recreation improvements outlined in section, the highest priorities are:

- Dedicate known priority sites for parks and other developed recreation facilities; complete a community recreation, parks and open space master plan to identify a more complete list of lands needed for this purpose.
- Community building, with adjoining outdoor recreation/sports facilities.
- Improvements to water access “parks” – better signage, parking, informational signs, possible play facilities for neighborhood kids (e.g., Jewel Lake in Anchorage).



## **GOAL 5** Create a sustainable recreation management system.

### **BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES**

Identifying and developing trails, recreation and open space needs and projects is a necessary first step in meeting community recreation goals. The key second step is defining strategies to operate, maintain and manage these facilities and activities. Good management is essential for making the Trails, Recreation and Open Space plans sustainable.

The confluence of the upper forks of Montana Creek, at the Yoder Road Bridge, is a good example of the problems that arise when recreation use is not well managed. This is a magical spot, that has drawn a range of users for many years, including people coming to fish, camp, hike, and simply enjoy the tranquility of the natural world. In recent years use has grown and gotten increasingly out of control. Current problems include dumping, shooting, lack of restrooms, and a range of illegal behaviors. Direct action is now needed to manage this use, to protect the integrity of the creek and surrounding natural landscapes, to improve the quality of the recreation experience, and to avoid growing safety and nuisance problems that impact local residents.

Given ongoing fiscal challenges facing the Borough and the State, creative methods to pay for management and maintenance costs are needed. Declining State and Borough budgets are placing greater responsibilities for local management of recreation and trails activities.

Options for improving maintenance and operation of recreation facilities include:

- Creating revenue from the use of a recreation facility to cover management costs. In Talkeetna, for example, the community charges for parking and uses these revenues to manage the adjoining river front park. State and Federal campgrounds commonly charge a fee for use, and this approach is increasingly being proposed at Alaskan day use recreation areas.
- Relying on local volunteers, camp hosts.
- Look for opportunities for multiple uses of established facilities like a school.
- Establishing a recreation service area, to raise funds through property taxes.
- Making explicit arrangements with a third party – the Park Service, the State or Borough - to be responsible for managing recreation facilities.
- Establishing an “impact fee” system, as is common in the western United States, where new development/subdivisions pay into a fund to operate parks and other recreation facilities.

As the level and variety of recreation activities increases, there are often conflicts that require management, for example, conflicts over motorized vs. non-motorized trail use. Options to manage recreation use include:

- Information (e.g., brochures, signs, maps to guide recreation use to the right locations).
- Education (e.g., programs on trail etiquette, perhaps conducted by a local snow machine club).
- Design and location of facilities (e.g., directing trail use to a preferred location by constructing a trail head, trails in the right location).
- On the ground enforcement (e.g., through the state troopers, MSB land management).

## HOW? MEANS TO MANAGE RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

Specific recommendations for managing YCC area parks, open space and other recreation areas and facilities need further discussion and priority setting by the community. Ideas include:

- The Community Council should continue to advocate for better recreation management by State and Borough; this effort will be most successful if coupled with fundraising and volunteer coordination from the local community.
- Recreational education and information programs (maps, brochures, posted regulations, speed limits, directional signage, etc.).
- Directional roadway signs (trailheads, roadside, lake access points, etc.).
- Create local outreach/educational programs (Adopt-A-Road, trail clearing events, school programs, community newsletter notices, etc.).
- Create economic incentives for development and ongoing maintenance (public-private partnerships for campgrounds, facilities, etc.).
- Consider user fees for specific areas.
- Create lake management plans.
- Consider regulations that can be enforced through public or private means (police, neighborhood watch, local towing company, etc.).
- Consider alternative models such as recreation service districts, land trusts, neighborhood patrols, community associations, etc. Some of these bodies may be able to assess fees as well as maintain parks.
- Provide and maintain restroom facilities in all areas of concentrated recreation use
- Prior to the creation or expansion of recreation facilities, for example, prior to improving pullouts and road-side parking that attracts recreation use, the party planning the improvement needs to ensure resources are available to manage anticipated recreation use.

### **Summary: Highest priorities for near-term action.**

Of the recreation management actions outlined in this section, the highest priorities are:

- The Y community, State DNR, the Borough, private land owners, and representatives of user groups should meet and prepare a realistic plan to manage recreation use in the vicinity of the Yoder Road bridge over at the Montana Creeks confluence area
- Establishing a user fee and enforcement program to help cover costs related to winter snow machine use.
- Prepare a community recreation map, guiding users to preferred locations, identifying private lands, and setting out rules for behavior as part of the Parks & Trails Master Plan.
- Improvements to water access “parks” – better signage, parking, informational signs, possible play facilities for neighborhood kids (e.g., Jewel Lake in Anchorage).

## MAJOR GOALS & STRATEGIES

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### Circulation (roads, trails, train, planes...)

*“The roads get pretty rutted and wash-boarded in the summer and kind of dusty, but I think that’s OK. I think I’d rather have it more secluded around here than have good roads.”*

*“As far as the bypass is concerned, I’d love to see them start as far south as they can and take it as far north as they can around us.”*

*“When I moved here, there weren’t any roads. Now, there’re roads all over the place. That’s good and bad, I guess. They say it’s the fastest-growing area in the state. That’s progress, I guess.”*

### Overview

*Circulation* refers to the range of systems used to move people and goods around and through the YCC Area. This includes private vehicles, trains and planes, walking, skiing, four wheelers, snow machines and other trail activities. Currently the YCC Area circulation system includes the Parks Highway and Spur Road, a set of mostly east-west collectors, and a collection of residential subdivision roads. Some of these are beginning to function as local collectors. Other systems include the Alaska Railroad, a number of airstrips, and an extensive, but mostly informal trail system. Several of these trails have been used for many years. The trail that follows the south fork of Montana Creek provided access for miners from the Sunshine rail stop east into the Talkeetna Mountains. This trail follows an even earlier route used by the Athabaskan tribes that originally inhabited the area.



View south down the Spur Road

The YCC Area has grown steadily over recent years, and this growth is expected to continue. Future projects that might impact transportation goals include improvements on the Parks Highway and the proposed Knik Arm crossing. Both projects would reduce the time required to reach the YCC Area from employment and other urban attractions further south.

As the YCC Area has grown, circulation needs have become more complex. Additional road access to private property, informal trails, and routes used by snowmachiners can increase circulation conflicts. Residents envision an area with commercial development focused in specific areas, with most of the YCC Area devoted to low-density rural residential development or open space. Much of the YCC Area is unsuited to development due to the presence of wetlands or steep slopes. These characteristics facilitate low-density development interspersed with open areas while rendering access more difficult and costly.

This circulation plan addresses residents’ desires for low-density residential areas and focused commercial development. It also makes suggestions on upgrading existing roads and locating future

collectors to serve the remaining private property likely to be developed. Early location of future collector roads will allow the Borough to obtain cost-effective right-of-way, while allowing present and future residents some idea as to where future main roads will be located.

## **Circulation Goals**

The circulation element of this plan is intended to allow the YCC Area to grow as a largely rural community; in a predictable manner with efficient development of roads and other infrastructure. These goals are derived from the Summer 2003 and the Spring 2004 Community Workshops. This plan follows a three-part process: (1) define broad goals, (2) outline facilities and policies that will respond to these goals, and (3) propose methods for accomplishing the goals.

- 1. Plan for future expansion of the residential road system; identify roads to serve as collectors.**
- 2. Define standards for road development and surfacing.**
- 3. Guide expansion of the Parks Highway; consider a bypass, rather than widening the existing highway (see note re: two options for discussion).**
- 4. Plan for good town center access.**
- 5. Maintain opportunities for transit, including rail and carpools.**
- 6. Maintain and improve roadside trails – (see also Recreation & Open Space section).**
- 7. Improve road maintenance.**

## **GOAL 1 Plan for growing use of the road system, plan improvements of existing roads and new roads; identify roads to serve as collectors and arterials.**

### **BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES**

The YCC Area road system has developed organically. The road circulation system is likely to go through growing pains as more land is developed. The roads serving subdivisions were originally constructed for low levels of use. With increased development some of these roads are effectively functioning as **collectors** -- roads that carry traffic from multiple subdivisions to a larger traffic artery, such as the Parks Highway or the Talkeetna Spur Road. To avoid inappropriate levels of use on residential roads, a plan is needed that identifies existing and future roads with collectors that are buffered from residential development. Potential collectors or arterials need to be identified, improved and maintained to a higher standard.

In addition, neighborhoods with significant populations have only one road connection to the Parks Highway or the Spur Road. Greater connectivity between neighborhoods and main highways can improve public safety in case of emergency and can spread traffic over additional routes. Identification and reservation of rights-of-way should happen as early as possible to maximize route selection and to minimize public cost.

### **HOW? - MEANS TO IMPROVE EXISTING ROADS AND PLAN FOR FUTURE ROADS**

#### **A. Improve the capacity of existing roads to better serve current and expected future increases in traffic.**

As existing subdivisions, such as Caswell Lakes, are more fully developed, traffic on access roads will increase. A number of public comments made during planning meetings indicated that traffic has increased on Hidden Hills Road, Montana Creek Road and other roads serving multiple subdivisions. Since many of these roads were built to modest standards with gravel surfacing, traffic should be monitored to ensure that the road standards and surfacing are appropriate for traffic volumes. As volumes increase, road geometrics and surfacing should be improved. Although the common response to increased traffic levels is wider, straighter, harder-surfaced roads, residents also expressed the desire to maintain the rural character of the area (see more under Goal 2), a characteristic that can be associated with gravel surfaced roads.

Specific road segments recommended for near term improvements are listed below, and shown on the YCC Area Circulation Map.

Priority areas for improvements – preferably to arterial standards (paved surfacing), but at minimum to collector standards include:

- Montana Creek Road (west of Monsitna, in the area where the road is being moved)
- Lower Montana Creek Road
- Lower Hidden Hills Road
- Second priority areas for improvements – upgraded to collector standards (gravel surfacing) include:

- South Birch Creek
- Noel Wien
- Yoder Road
- Helena
- Upper Montana Creek
- Lower Amundsen
- Upper Hidden Hills
- Broken Line, Bendapole, Dolly Varden

Traffic volumes are directly related to the density of development. So that the capacity and maintainability of gravel roads is not exceeded, the number of households per acre would need to be limited. Gravel-surfaced roads are preferred at low levels of traffic. As traffic increases, a point is reached where gravel surfacing becomes more expensive than hard-surfaced roads. To minimize requirements for major road improvements, and to reduce maintenance costs and keep roads in good condition, traffic levels or “trigger points” can be set. Once these are reached, the road section would be placed on a candidate list for hard surfacing.

**B. Improve connectivity between existing residential roads. Provide alternate routes linking residential areas with the Parks Highway & Spur Road. Plan collector roads to serve future growth which is likely to occur on presently undeveloped private property.**

The road network in the YCC Area has grown in response to individual private property development. A portion of the private property has been subdivided, and some of the subdivided property has been improved. In many of the presently developed subdivisions, only a fraction of the lots have had homes or other structures built upon them (see Land Use chapter). Significant parts of the area are unsuitable for development due to the presence of wetlands or steep slopes. The combined effect of the natural environment and past development is a patchwork of developed and undeveloped areas. Many of the subdivisions are 1-4 miles from the Parks Highway or Talkeetna Spur Road, and are located at the eastern edge of the privately-owned land.

A review of property ownership and soil suitability provides a good sense of which parts of the YCC Area are candidates for development through 2025. Chapter 2’s Land Ownership Map shows the planning area with developable land shown in private, native corporation, University of Alaska, or Borough ownership. Chapter 2’s Soils Map shows sections classified as having “serious” limitations on development due to the nature of the soils. Land that is both developable from an ownership standpoint and does not have soils-related limitations on construction constitutes the part of the YCC Area most likely to be developed over the next 20 years.

The Land Ownership and Soils Map, existing roads, rights-of-way and section-line easements can be used together to identify possible future collector-level road connections. The YCC Area Circulation Map shows prospective new road connections. These routes are designed to accomplish the following:

- Connect developable property to the existing road system cost-effectively.
- Provide additional access to larger subdivisions – “two ways in and out”.

- Connect subdivisions with one another so that travel need not always involve the major highways.
- Avoid building arterial roads parallel to the Parks Highway/Spur Road that would generate high speeds and unsafe conditions. Developable land in the YCC Area does not appear to lie in long continuous north-south strips, so proposed roads will be mostly short connections to existing roads.

Proposed road links and bridges are listed below and shown on the YCC Area Circulation Map. Please note: these routes have not been “field checked” for on-the-ground conditions that would make the road link shown difficult to construct. It is possible that some of the proposed connections confront topographical or other constraints that will result in a different alignment.

- Montana Creek-Malispina Connector – Would provide a link between Bartlett Hills Subdivision and upper Montana Creek areas. Although the connection needed is short, it crosses through challenging terrain, including the area locally known as “blue goo hill.”
- Anaconda Bridge – Would provide a direct link from the Sunshine area into residential areas in upper Montana Creek (and eventually Bartlett Hills).
- Montana Creek-Amundsen/Caswell Connector – This route connects these two major residential areas.
- Shaman-Amundsen Connector – Provides an additional route out of the densely subdivided Caswell Lakes area.
- Shade Tree – Extends west to the Parks Highway.

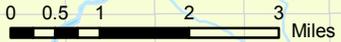
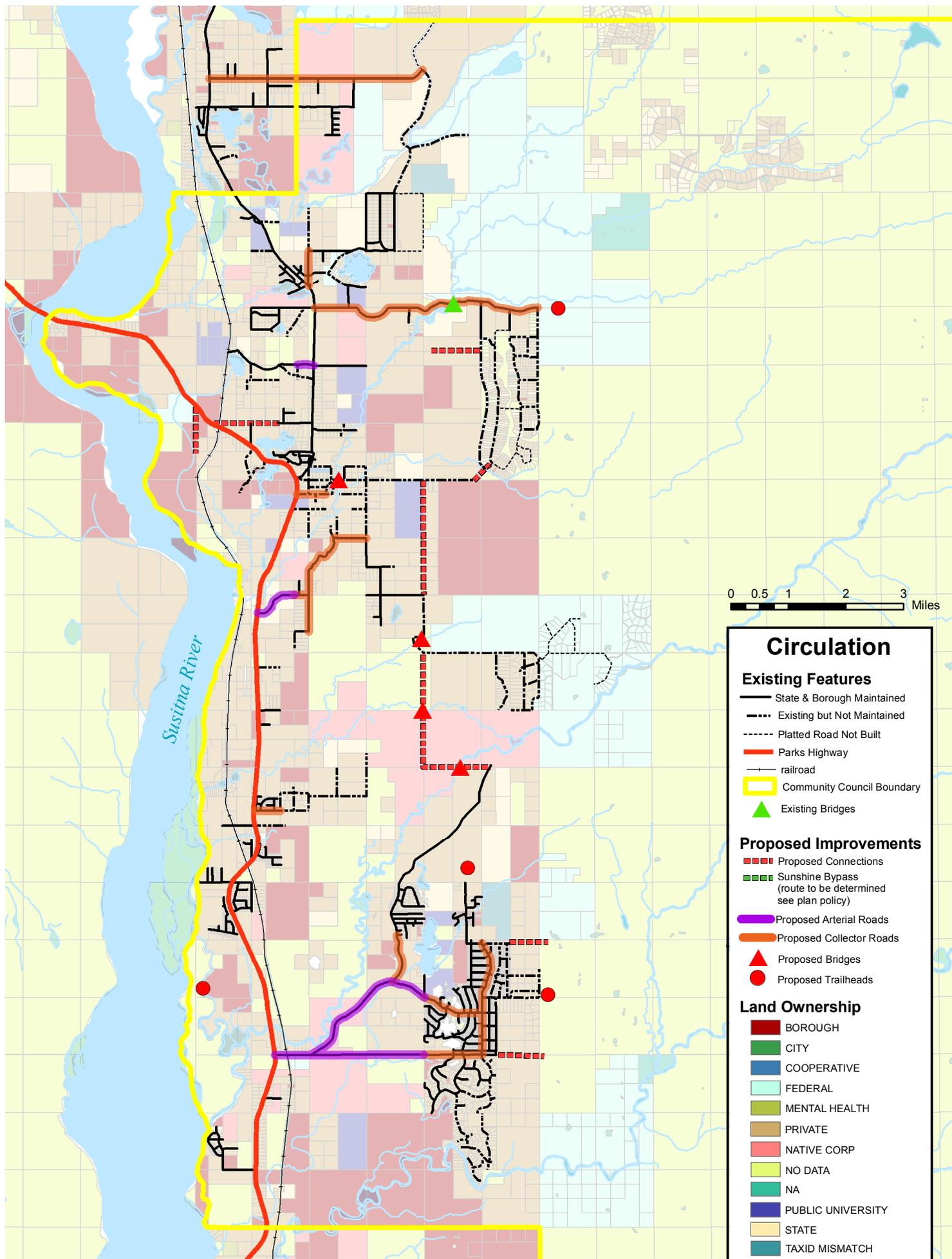
Although AASHTO<sup>1</sup> standards generally call for road widening and straightening as volumes increase in the YCC Area, residents may prefer to keep roads narrower and curvier to maintain rural character and keep traffic speed down. The tradeoff is longer trip times for users.

*It’s not all asphalt!*

*Although asphalt is commonly used to hard-surface roads, there are other options:*

- **Chip-seal** is an oil/asphalt emulsion applied to a prepared gravel surface. Advantages are: lower cost and ease of repair. The chief disadvantage is that it must be carefully applied during favorable weather.
- **Dust palliatives**, such as calcium chloride, serve to bind the gravel and the “fines” or small particles in a gravel road. The result produces a firmer surface with little dust. The disadvantage is that it must be re-applied regularly.

<sup>1</sup> The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials’ design standards publication *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways & Streets*, Fourth Edition, 2001.



Susitna River

**C. Develop a variety of ways for the Borough to reserve right-of-way for future collector and arterial roads.**

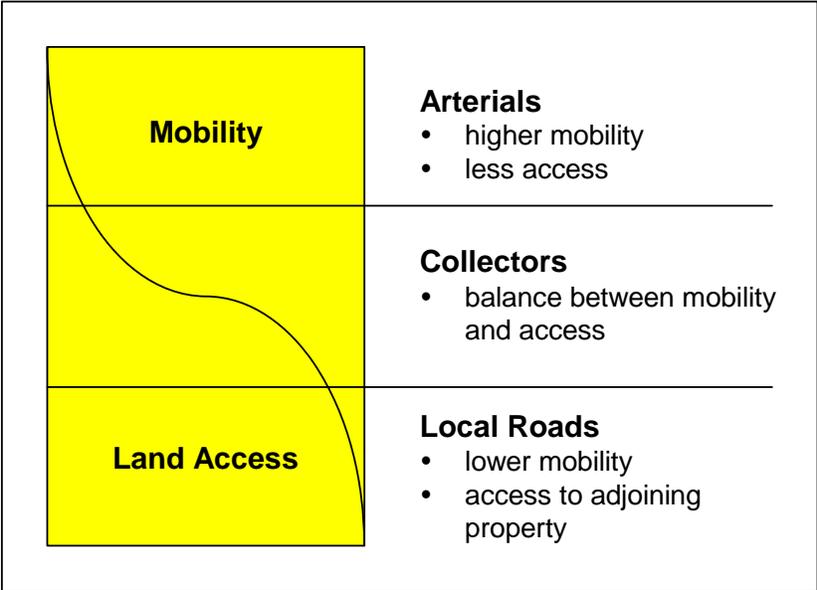
Routes for future collector and arterial roads should be identified for a number of reasons:

*Early location of collector and arterial roads reduces the chance that too much traffic will use low volume residential streets.* One negative impact of subdivisions developed with little or no land use controls is the “creeping collector”. For example, an early subdivision is located close to the highway. The roads built for the subdivision are all local roads, appropriate for serving a single subdivision. Later, a second subdivision is built behind the first. The roads built for the second subdivision are connected to the first subdivision’s roads. As houses are built in the second subdivision, traffic slowly increases on the first subdivision’s roads, and in particular on the roads providing the most direct link to the highway. If the process is allowed to continue with no thought to the location and construction of a collector road, traffic volumes, fair distribution of road maintenance costs, safety and other issues arise. It is also much more expensive to establish a main or collector road in a developed area with higher land costs and limited location choices.

*Early location of collector and arterial roads minimizes the cost of right-of-way.* Establishment of a future collector route to serve rural development allows the Borough and if applicable, the road service district, to plan for, reserve, and over time acquire right-of-way for the road. Proper planning insures that it can be designed and built in a cost-effective manner.

*Early road location minimizes hard feelings.* Without location and designation of future collector roads, subdivisions are built and lots occupied before residents know where the future main roads will be located. It is far preferable for those who buy land in a subdivision to know, for example, that the western boundary of the subdivision will at some time have a collector route built along it, than for the property buyers to expect (unrealistically, but we’ve all seen it) that the area “behind the house” will stay the way it is indefinitely.

**Figure 6: Safety Effectiveness of Highway Design Features**



Source: Safety Effectiveness of Highway Design Features, Vol. 1 FHWA, 1992

Development in some parts of the YCC Area has progressed to the point where the Borough should designate and begin setting aside needed rights-of-way for collector-level roads. An area-wide need is to identify the location of future roads and to develop a corridor preservation program. When a collector-level road is needed to connect subdivisions with highways or other arterials, the right-of-way will then be readily available. Without such a program, the cost of acquiring right-of-way can be high for not only the Borough, but for the residents whose homes and businesses must be relocated or impinged upon. In a developed community, the cost of right-of-way for a new road can equal or exceed construction costs. Locating future collector roads and establishing a corridor preservation program should be a key current objective of the Borough's road program.

Corridor preservation is a strategy that will help the community address its future transportation needs. A successful program typically includes a variety of tools that can be mixed and matched to fit the circumstances. The most common methods are fee simple purchase of land for right-of-way, and requiring building setbacks from road rights-of-way. Many road-building agencies also attempt to obtain voluntary dedications or donations of right-of-way on a case-by case basis during the land development process. Other approaches include options to purchase, interim use agreements, land banking, purchase of access rights and density credits. The key is to have a number of methods available so that the most appropriate can be used for a specific section of needed roadway.

It is important to ensure that the corridor management program has a solid foundation in the YCC Area Comprehensive Plan. This circulation element will outline collector road connections that will be needed as parcels of private property develops. It will be important to take a number of steps in the near future to identify and preserve corridors for these connections. These steps include:

- Identify section line and other existing (but unconstructed) roadway easements;
- Finalize the "preliminary" future corridor needs identified in this plan;
- Field verify the recommended corridors to make sure the routes are constructible; and
- In cases in which recommended or existing (section line) rights-of-way are not feasible, select alternative alignments.

It is not necessary (or possible, in many cases) to have a precise alignment identified before a road is designed, however, designated corridors should indicate corridor needs and show that engineering design studies will determine road location.

This plan focuses initially on parts of the YCC Area that have experienced residential development and have a combination of generally decent soils, private or Borough land ownership and enough area to make development of collector roads important to efficient handling of traffic as these areas develop. Where possible in necessary areas, the Borough should reserve 80 to 100 feet of right-of-way to accommodate collector or minor arterial level streets. Once a set of needed future corridors is finalized, the Borough will need to reserve as much of the land in the corridors as possible. In order to implement the corridor program, the following measures should be considered as tools to be developed and in some cases codified as Borough ordinances<sup>2</sup>:

- Restrictions on building in the right-of-way of a mapped but un-built road.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from *Managing Corridor Development: A Municipal Handbook*, Center for Urban Transportation Research, 1996.

- Require sub-dividers to contribute funds toward upgrades on roads that will be more heavily used as a result of their subdivisions; deny requests for waivers by sub-dividers who prefer to not improve roads to Borough standards.
- Grant allowances for some interim use of transportation right-of-way for uses having low structural impact through an agreement that requires the property owner to relocate or discontinue the use at their expense when the land is ultimately needed for the transportation facility.
- Create criteria for right-of-way exactions and a process for determining the amount of right-of-way dedication that is roughly proportionate to the impact of the proposed development.
- Give a reduction or reprieve from property taxes on property subject to corridor preservation restrictions. Examples include removing property from the tax roll, lowering the tax rate for preserved land, or providing a tax credit.
- An option for clustering developments by reducing setbacks or other site design requirements to avoid encroachment into the right-of-way.
- Procedures for intergovernmental coordination between the Borough and the AK DOT/PF. This should include policies limiting access to preserve traffic carrying capacity and protect roadside visual quality as the area develops.

## **GOAL 2 Define standards for road development and surfacing.**

### **BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES**

Residents like the rural character of the YCC Area and would like to see it preserved. The local gravel-surfaced roads are a key element in this area's rural feeling. To avoid too many wide, straight, paved arterial and collector roads serving neighborhoods in the area in the future, general road standards should be created to guide the development of future road design and construction. Standards for the YCC Area should stress characteristics that reinforce the rural, slow-paced character of the place. As development densities increase beyond 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres, the need for hard-surfaced roads increases. For roads that serve higher traffic volumes, for which gravel surfacing is not practical, the first hard-surface options should emphasize surfaces that are less expensive and have less of an urban "feel" than asphalt.

### **HOW? - MEANS TO SHAPE THE STANDARDS FOR FUTURE ROADS**

#### **A. Develop rural or "country" road standards that call for appropriate road widths, horizontal and vertical curves, and surfacing.**

Road standards and their interpretation have been both contested and evolving in the past several years. Conservative and rigid use of roadway design standards put forth by the AASHTO has relaxed to some extent. There is increasing understanding that incorporating community values, creativity and the flexibility provide superior all-around service to the community. In 1997, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) published *Flexibility in Highway Design*, which provided guidance and encouragement to transportation engineers to conceive of roadway solutions broadly and creatively. In 1995, Congress passed the National Highway System Act, which states in section 304:

A design for new construction, reconstruction, resurfacing...restoration, or rehabilitation of a highway on the National Highway System...may take into account ...(in addition to safety, durability and economy of maintenance)...

(A) the constructed and natural environment of the area;

(B) the environmental, scenic, aesthetic, historic, community, and preservation impacts of the activity; and

(C) access for other modes of transportation.

In *Flexibility in Highway Design* the FHWA points out that "by emphasizing the importance of good design for National Highway System roads, Congress is saying that careful, context-sensitive design is a factor that should not be overlooked for any road."

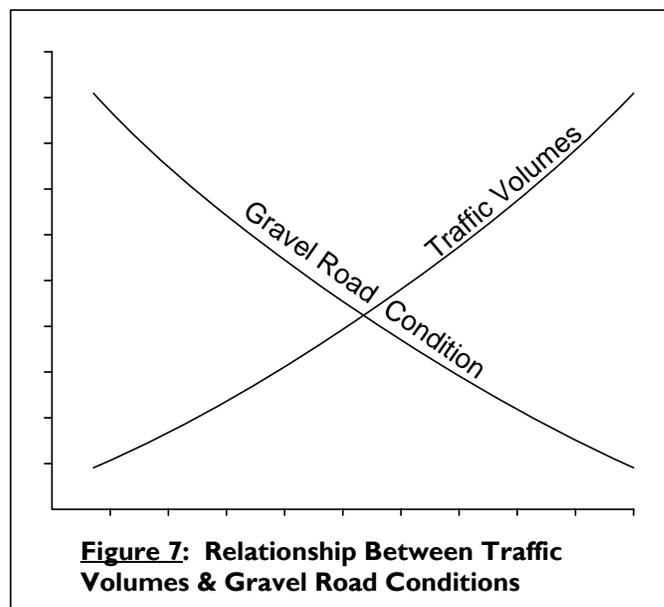
Local and collector road standards in the rural parts of the Borough should ensure that roads are designed and constructed in a manner that strikes a balance between capacity and design speed on one hand, and roads that are rural in nature and "rest easy" on the land on the other.

In the near term, priority should go to improving the surfaces of primary collector roads. Paving Hidden Hills is one example. As new collectors are built, consider curving alignments, to help control speeds and maintain the "country" feel of the area.

**B. Provide development density standards supportive of lower-density development that can be supported by gravel-surfaced roads.**

Gravel-surfaced roads are ideal for limiting speeds and maintaining a “country” feel. Without treatment, however, gravel roads and traffic can produce large amounts of dust. Higher traffic volumes result in the need for frequent grading and high maintenance costs. Recent research on the relationship between gravel-surfaced roads and development density helps establish reasonable standards for limits on development density as a way to avoid paved, higher-speed roads. The traffic volumes on collector and higher level roads are directly related to the number of households the roads serve. Everyone who lives on or regularly uses a gravel-surfaced road knows that the condition of the road is related to the level of maintenance and the level of traffic. The relationship is illustrated in Figure 8.

Table 15 shows the relationship between gravel road type and maximum density of development in dwelling units per acre. The gravel road “type” classifies gravel roads based on surface type, width, clear zones, drainage and comfortable travel speed. Note that the maximum density for a higher-capacity gravel road is over six acres per dwelling unit, assuming the area served by the road is fully built-out.



**Table 15: Residential Densities and Gravel Road Capacity<sup>3</sup>**

Gravel Road Type	Dwelling Units to be Built on 640 Acres	Traffic Generated (vehicle trips/day)	Maximum Dwelling Units per Acre
A	100	800-1000	1 DU per 6.67 acres
B	80	600-799	1 DU per 8 acres
C	60	400-599	1 DU per 10.67 acres
D	40	200-399	1 DU per 16 acres
E	20	0-199	1 DU per 32 acres

Some parts of the YCC Area will have low densities, but limiting the area to gravel-surfaced roads requires limiting density to levels well below one dwelling unit per acre.

**C. In cases where traffic volumes require hard-surfacing, alternatives to asphalt should be considered.**

If low densities at full build-out are impractical in some areas, then methods to build hard-surfaced roads that are not wide and straight should be considered. Alternative surfacing methods, such as chip-sealing, avoiding straight road alignments, and building roads on the narrow side of accepted standards will all contribute to lower travel speeds and a “country” aesthetic.

Although chip-seal in the place of pavement and a narrow road profile will reduce the cost of road development, alignments that depart from straight roads on section lines will tend to increase the cost of collector roads. An additional factor is travel speed. Most residents support lower travel speeds in the interests of safety, lower traffic noise levels and similar effects. To the driver, narrower, curving, gravel-surfaced roads mean slower speeds and more time required to make a trip. Based on the comments made during the public workshops for the YCC Comprehensive Plan, residents prefer “slow and country” to “fast and urban,” even if trips to the Parks Highway and beyond take more time. To the Borough, such a design ethic will increase the need to identify right-of-way for future roads earlier in order to minimize right-of-way costs. “Slow and country” will likely require more unique sections of right-of-way and less reliance on section line easements.

There appears to be a consensus on standards used to build collector roads in the YCC Area. Lower-volume roads will be consistent with the sense and image held of the area by many residents. Fortunately, the YCC Area is characterized by scattered private land and the presence of large tracts of wetland, gullies, creeks and other limitations to ease residential development and road building. These elements will limit the additional collector-level roads built over the next 20 years to those shown on the Circulation Map, or a set of roads similar in scale to those shown.

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<sup>3</sup> From “The Crunch of Development Along Gravel Roads,” in *Zoning Practice*, the American Planning Association, February 2004. These data were developed for rural parts of the Midwest. Values for the Y area would likely be similar.

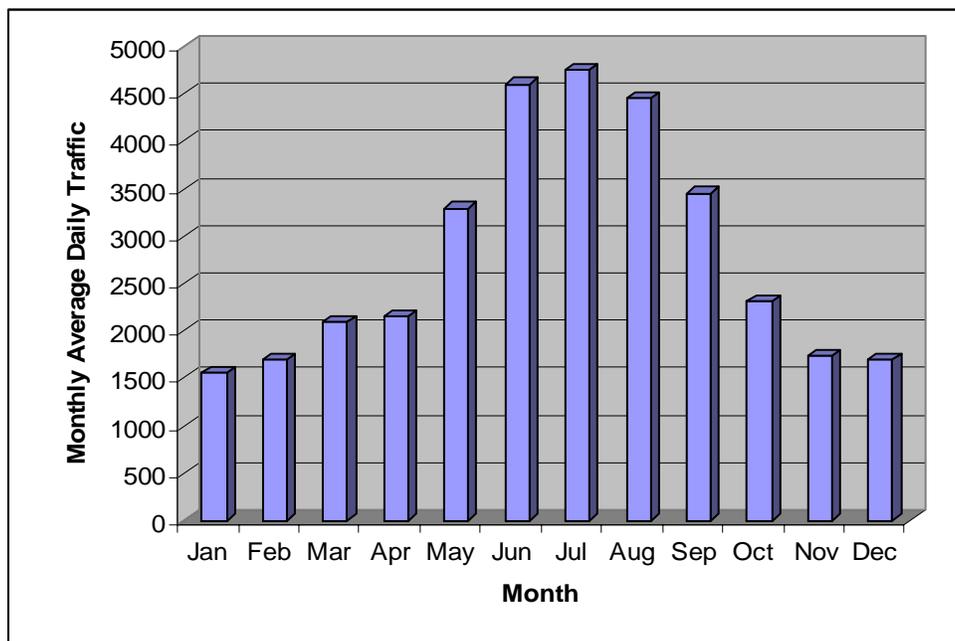
**GOAL 3** Guide expansion of the Parks Highway; establish a bypass, rather than widening the existing highway, as part of the plan for developing a successful town center.

**BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES**

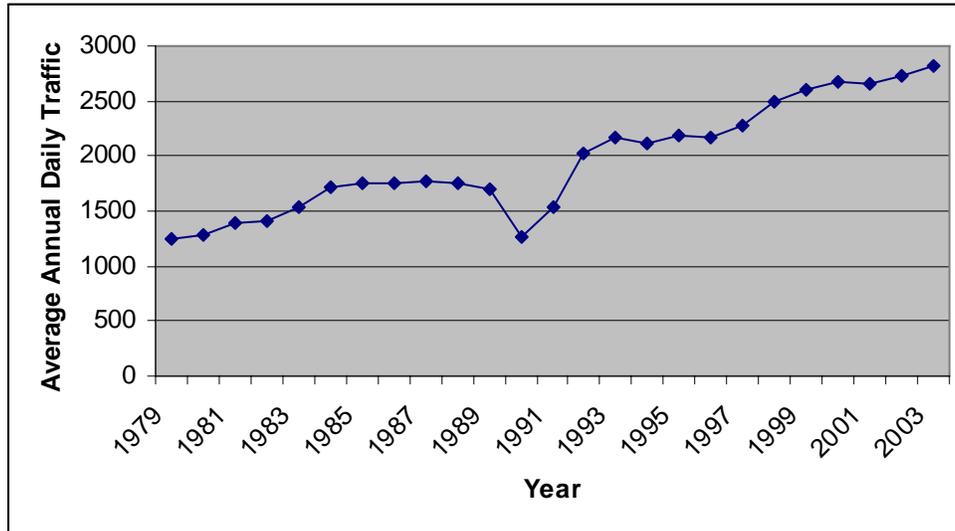
Traffic continues to increase on the Parks Highway. The recently completed Draft Parks Highway Management Plan (AK DOT/PF, November 2002) predicts continued growth, from 2,200 vehicles per day in 2000, to 4,700 per day by 2030. The plan identifies the eventual need for either a bypass or a major, freeway-style intersection at the Talkeetna cutoff.

The decision about commercial development along the Parks is perhaps the most important topic this plan can address. If the community continues to grow, and if tourism and other economic activities expand in the North Borough, more commercial development will be inevitable. The community, if it chooses, can guide this growth to a handful of relatively concentrated commercial areas or it can permit growth to extend along the length of the highway, as in Wasilla, Houston and Big Lake. Construction of a limited-access bypass could be very helpful if the goal is greater concentration of development an adjacent town center.

**Figure 8: 2003 Parks Highway Traffic at Willow**



**Figure 9: Historical Parks Highway Average Daily Traffic at Willow**



## HOW? - PARKS HIGHWAY DEVELOPMENT THAT SUPPORTS THE YCC AREA TOWN CENTER

### A. Plan for future re-alignment of the Parks Highway including a bypass.

In the recent Parks Highway corridor planning effort, the AK DOT/PF identified the possibility of constructing a bypass around the junction of the highway with the Talkeetna Spur Road.

Comments at the Spring 2004 Workshops made clear the support for the concept of a bypass. They also indicated that work was needed to find a route that would reduce negative impacts on adjoining properties, the environment and existing businesses. It is also evident that some local residents do not want the bypass, at least on the route currently proposed in the AK DOT/PF study. Also clear is that there is very little support for the large scale, land-consuming interchange and/or frontage road options for the Spur Road-Parks Highway junction identified in the AK DOT/PF corridor plan.

Even with continued rapid growth in State population and Parks Highway traffic, and even with full support, it is unlikely the bypass would be constructed for 20 years or more. Consequently, a key issue addressed by this plan was whether or not to reserve a route for the bypass and to develop other infrastructure in the Sunshine area in anticipation of the road's eventual development.

The conclusion of this plan is encourage reservation of a bypass route, and eventually, construction of a bypass. The main goal of developing a bypass is to help create a concentrated, pedestrian-oriented, attractive and commercially-successful town center at the Sunshine Y. Other important benefits include improved safety for pedestrians and smoother flow of through traffic.

A new route for the Parks Highway, west of Sunshine would result in the existing section of the highway becoming a "business arterial." Slower speeds and less traffic volume would be more consistent with residents' vision of a walkable, friendly, small-scale town center.

The common fear about highway bypasses is their potential to reduce traffic and highway-related business for the bypassed old highway. With summer tourism providing income to many area businesses, reduction in traffic could be a cause for concern. However, evidence from national

studies shows the net affect of bypasses is generally neutral or positive (see the website listed below for a research summary). In this specific instance, the link to Talkeetna, with its substantial name recognition, should further mitigate the potential negative economic effects of a bypass. Many visitors will leave the Parks Highway to visit Talkeetna and nearby attractions, all of whom will pass through the YCC Area town center. More importantly, creation of an attractive, pedestrian oriented town center will attract visitors who might otherwise drive by.

Without a bypass, traffic will continue to grow on the Parks Highway. AK DOT/PF anticipates that in 2030 average daily traffic in the summer could approach 5,000, and under some scenarios, 10,000 average daily cars. Volumes in this range would result in restrictions on driveway connections to the highway and the prospect of a partially limited-access road with an interchange with the Talkeetna Spur Road at the Y. This combination of highway improvements would make it significantly more difficult to create a YCC Area town center with a small-town feel.

The decision about the relationship between through traffic and commercial districts is a shaper of community character, and a decision that has been debated in communities around the United States (check <http://www.edrgroup.com/pages/pdf/Town-Bypass-Case-Studies.pdf> for a summary of economic issues of bypasses). In many cases, the decision is made that a bypass is preferred to funneling through traffic through the heart of downtown. Alternative approaches and outcomes on this issue in several Alaska communities are summarized below:

- *Wasilla* – Commercial activity stretches for approximately 10 miles along the Parks Highway. Few people, particularly visitors, find this “commercial strip” to be attractive or efficient. Traffic congestion is steadily increasing, and the community lacks a coherent center of town. The AK DOT/PF is now purchasing land, at great expense, for a bypass.
- *Soldotna* – Commercial activity extends for several miles along the Sterling Highway. Traffic congestion is steadily increasing, the community lacks a coherent center of town. AK DOT/PF is now working on plans for a bypass.
- *Eagle River* – Glenn Highway bypasses downtown. Downtown Eagle River, after a period of adjustment, is growing and becoming an increasingly attractive and successful commercial and civic center for the community.
- *Glitter Gulch/Nenana Canyon* – The Parks Highway divides the heart of this major tourism destination. After years of community pressure, several pedestrian deaths, and an extensive analysis of bypass options, a decision was made to keep the Parks Highway in its existing location. This decision was primarily due to the extraordinarily high cost of moving the road. Traffic impacts will be reduced by reducing speed limits, and adding traffic signals, frontage roads, landscaping and pedestrian crossings.

#### *Bypass Goals and Strategies*

- Establish a route, and eventually construct a Sunshine Bypass.
- The route of the bypass will have the following qualities:
  - minimize adverse impacts on existing Parks Highway businesses (e.g., by ensuring the new road provides good access to Sunshine commercial district).
  - minimize adverse environmental impacts (e.g., minimizing impacts on wetlands, stream systems, etc.).
  - minimize adverse impacts on property owners located along or near bypass
  - provide for efficient flow of through traffic.

- consistent with other considerations outlined above, minimize costs, including costs for construction and right-of-way acquisition. Consider options for using established rights of way, such as the Alaska Railroad.
- Limit commercial uses along the bypass route, to encourage commercial uses to concentrate in the planned town center at the Y intersection
- Plan the route of the bypass, and circulation within the future Sunshine town center, to create the greatest odds of success for businesses in that area
- Follow the process outlined below to select a route
  - AK DOT/PF pays for and takes the lead on the process
  - process will give MSB and the community a substantial role in decision-making about the road
  - process will identify and compare different alternatives, and select the alternative that best meets the community objectives listed above

**B. Limit sprawled commercial development along the Talkeetna Spur Road and the Parks Highway.**

To create a viable YCC Area community center, it will be necessary to make that area the focus of commercial development. If commercial enterprises are allowed to sprawl along the Parks Highway and Talkeetna Spur, it will be more difficult to achieve the concentration of development necessary for a functional town center. As outlined in the Land Use chapter, the plan encourages commercial development in the Sunshine town center area and the Sheep Creek/Caswell Lakes area (near the intersection of the Parks Highway and Hidden Hills Road).

**C. Encourage AK DOT/PF to limit driveway permitting in areas outside commercial nodes.**

For a community plan to become reality, enforcement of the goals of the plan is essential. To focus development in certain areas, some control must be exerted over the location of future development. One such existing mechanism is AK DOT/PF's control over driveway access to highways such as the Parks and the Talkeetna Spur. Although state government is not obligated to support a local land use plan, it is likely that the AK DOT/PF will be inclined to work with the community. Random, helter-skelter development with frequent driveway connections to a highway limits the highway's ability to serve through traffic. Coming on the heels of AK DOT/PF's own Parks Highway corridor planning, the Department may well be willing to enter into an agreement with the Borough to limit the frequency of driveway connections to the highways.

**D. Take actions to address safety and congestion issues at intersections of the Parks Highway and major east-west collector roads.**

Traffic and traffic-related conflicts continue to grow along the Parks Highway. Problems are growing in locations like the stretch of highway in the vicinity of Montana Creek and the Spur Road. Problems include a narrow bridge; vehicular, bike and foot traffic coming out of the school and senior center; and pedestrians crossing the road for fishing and other recreation activities. The result is an increasing risk of serious accidents between cars, or cars and pedestrians. The Alaska DOT and the Borough should work with the community to reduce safety hazards along this stretch of highway. Possible actions include reduced speed limits, more signage, pedestrian paths, and improved pedestrian crossing points.

## **GOAL 4 Plan for good access to town center.**

### **BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES**

Good access is key to a successful town center - by road, trail, and perhaps ultimately by rail. “Good access” means the town center is readily accessible by car, and at the same time, is a safe and comfortable place for moving around on foot. Downtown Talkeetna is an example of a place that strikes a good balance on these issues; Wasilla and Midtown Anchorage meet the first criteria, but not the second.

### **HOW? - MEANS TO ENSURE FUNCTIONALLY SUCCESSFUL TOWN CENTERS**

#### **A. Develop a town center circulation plan, providing for good access, visibility, parking, and pedestrian circulation needed for a successful town center.**

As described above, the development of a bypass is the project that will most affect the development of the town center. Without a bypass, efforts to create a town center will be struggling against the traffic volumes, speeds and noise of the Parks Highway. The creation of a bypass by AK DOT/PF to the west of the Y will make the evolution of an attractive community center significantly easier. Detailed planning for the YCC Area town center at the road junction can proceed based on the assumption that a bypass will be built and can include circulation considerations as well as aesthetics, services and other elements of an attractive town hub. A bypass will allow the use of the “old” section of the Parks Highway to become one of the main streets providing access to the town center, rather than the major traffic-carrying arterial to which all other nearby traffic functions would need to defer. The junction of the Parks Highway and the Talkeetna Spur Road could then be controlled by all-way stop signs, a traffic circle or similar means to limit speeds and improve safety.

Several strategies are key to inviting people to walk from one place to another in the town center, and ensuring that the pedestrian elements of the area are both enjoyable, safe and well used. Commercial and community functions need to be located close enough to each other that one would consider walking. Equally important is location and design of the walkways so that they are not impinged upon by parked or moving cars, and are designed attractively enough to encourage a stroll in place of a short trip by car.

#### **B. Develop circulation plans for other proposed commercial areas.**

The other Caswell Lakes commercial area identified during the planning process is to be located in the general vicinity of the Sheep Creek Lodge, to serve commercial needs of the southern YCC Area. To avoid traffic, pedestrian conflicts and degradation of the carrying capacity of the highway, development at this location should concentrate on one side of the highway, connected with a frontage road. This approach satisfies several concurrent goals:

- Minimize the need for pedestrians to cross the highway.
- Minimize traffic conflicts entering and exiting the commercial hub.
- Allow for safe, enjoyable pedestrian accessibility to all parts of the commercial hub.
- Facilitate landscaping and the creation of a visually appealing commercial center.

## **GOAL 5 Maintain opportunities for transit, including rail and carpools.**

### **BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES**

The option of getting around without a car is likely to grow in importance over the years. The YCC Area has a chance to encourage transit options by influencing the pattern of development (more concentrated, more options for transit) as well as taking advantage of the Alaska Railroad.

### **HOW? - DEVELOP WITH AN EYE TO THE FUTURE; PLAN AHEAD FOR TRANSIT AND CARPOOL OPTIONS**

#### **A. Locate and reserve carpool and park-and-ride lots.**

The first transit option for the YCC Area is likely to be carpooling and vanpooling. Although there is not a high proportion of area families with a household member commuting to work in Wasilla or elsewhere, over time the number of commuters is likely to increase. Ridesharing can save users a significant amount of money otherwise spent on gas, repairs, and wear and tear to the family vehicle. This service can be ad-hoc, organized by the Borough, or by a special-purpose private-non-profit.

If there is public property that can be used as a park-and-ride lot located near the YCC Area, or near the south end of the planning area, the service could develop relatively quickly. Areas that could potentially serve as park-and-ride lots should be identified as part of this planning effort and be designated. The property could be set aside, or used without the creation of structures to save it for future park-and-ride use. Initially, the service could operate on a public-use basis -- simply as a location for commuters to park their cars and join the day's driver.

#### **B. Work in concert with the Alaska Railroad.**

Freight traffic on the Alaska Railroad has grown and is expected to continue to grow at 3% per year. Principal commodities on the railroad as it traverses the area are petroleum products, coal and scrap. Passenger services and ridership are also increasing. Princess Cruises is considering establishing separate trains carrying only Princess cars from Whittier direct to Denali National Park. This addition would result in two passenger trains traveling in each direction each day during the summer. Although communities to the south are looking into commuter rail as a possibility in the future, it is unlikely that the volume of travelers and rail travel speeds would encourage rail commuter service from the YCC Area during the period covered by this plan. Nonetheless, it would be worthwhile to establish a future "station" location as part of the town center detailed planning process.

Rail crossings are a major concern, for safety and efficiency reasons. ARRC is unlikely to allow any additional at-grade crossings, and the cost of overcrossings is beyond the budget for most collector or local roads. AK DOT/PF intends, over time, to grade-separate all of the rail crossings on the Parks Highway. This program will include the crossing 3.5 miles north of Caswell Lakes Road, as well as the crossing located between the Y and the Susitna River Bridge. The latter grade-separation will likely be constructed along with the Parks Highway bypass of the Y as a single project.

## **GOAL 6 Maintain and improve roadside trails and trailheads.**

### **BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES**

The YCC Area has gained a major transportation resource recently with the creation of the paved roadside trail along the Talkeetna Spur Road. AK DOT/PF should be encouraged to extend the roadside trail to access the more populated parts of the YCC Area. Expansion of the roadside trail system can be a clear, simple community objective. Over the period covered by this plan, trailheads for snowmachiners and others should be moved from their current locations to locations that will result on fewer negative impacts on local residents.

### **HOW? - MEANS TO PLAN A SIMPLE ROADSIDE TRAIL SYSTEM**

#### **A. Develop a basic plan to expand the existing roadside trail system to serve multiple uses.**

A basic roadside trail system would build upon the new trail along the Talkeetna Spur Road. Initially, the trails should extend from the Y south and north along the Parks Highway to include areas with residential housing along the road. Trails should also extend from the school to allow students living within walking distance to walk or bike to school. It is important to identify these additional trail sections in the Comprehensive Plan for inclusion in future AK DOT/PF upgrade plans for the Parks Highway. Roadside trails are eligible for Federal Highways funding and can be included in highway upgrades-similar to the Spur Road, at a fraction of the overall cost of a trail designed and built independently.

Over time, as improvements are made to east-west collector roads, these projects should also include roadside trails.

#### **B. Plan and re-locate trailheads to the eastern boundary of privately held property in the YCC Area.**

The negative impacts caused by some snowmachiners and their vehicles are a common theme in any discussion of recreational trails in the YCC Area. The clearest consensus is that the trailheads should be moved from their existing locations. The best options are likely to be:

- Relocate the trailheads to the easternmost edge of private property in the YCC Area. Although this relocation would increase use of local roads for trailhead access, it would reduce the impacts of recreational snowmachine use on private property.
- Locate alternative trailheads adjacent to the Parks Highway or the Talkeetna Spur Road with a clearly delineated corridor to move snowmachines past (but not over) private property.

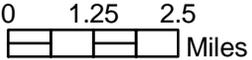
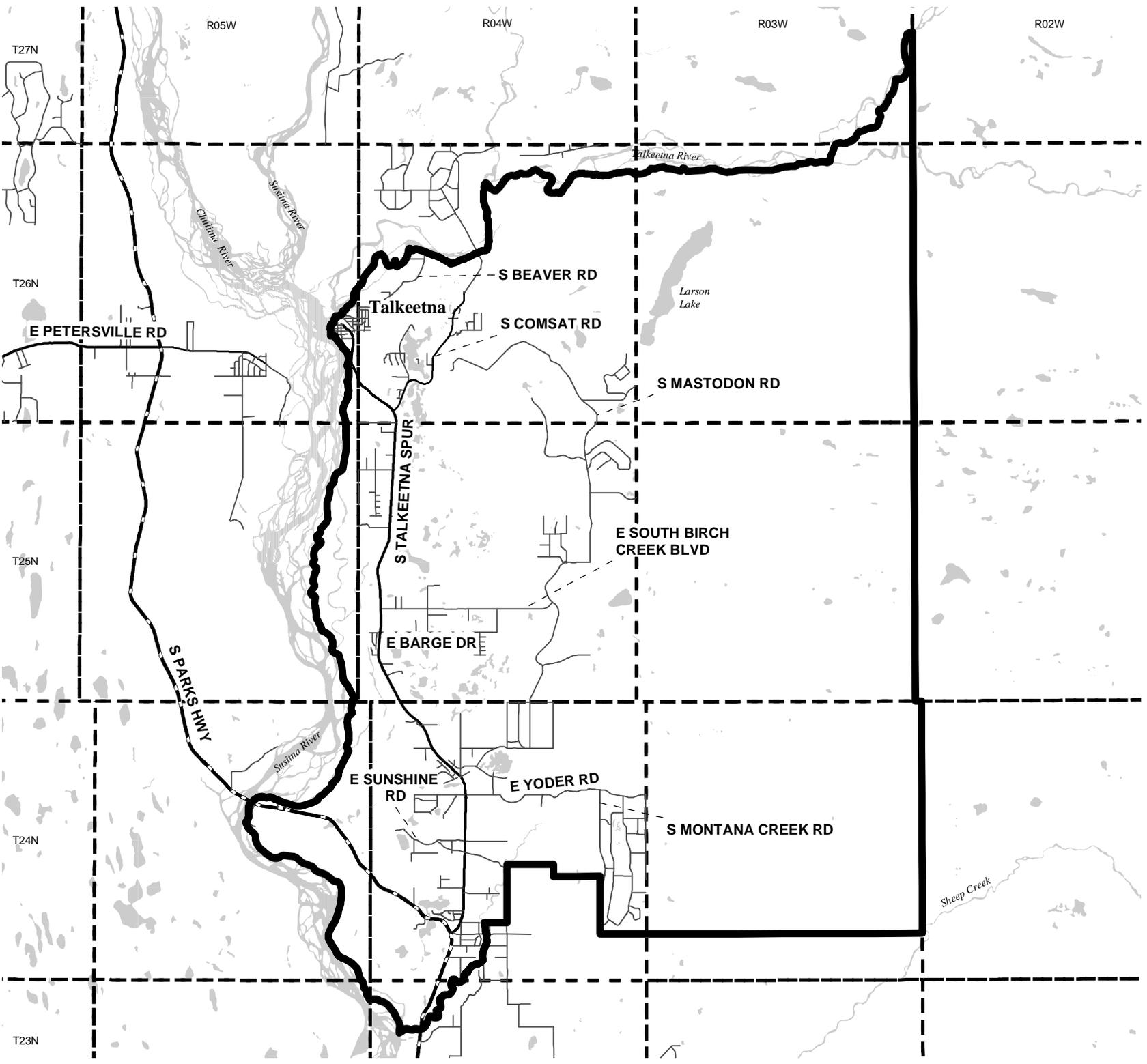
#### **C. Include roadside rest areas, pullouts and other roadside recreation amenities at select sites.**

Roadside recreation facilities can help provide facilities sought by travelers, and also help direct recreation to locations that reduce conflicts with residents or reduce environmental impacts. The Open Space and Recreation chapter gives more details on this goal; general objectives include providing several roadside rest stops and viewpoints, and where roads cross rivers, to establish a safe public recreation access point.

## **GOAL 7 Improve road maintenance.**

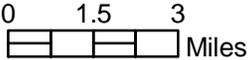
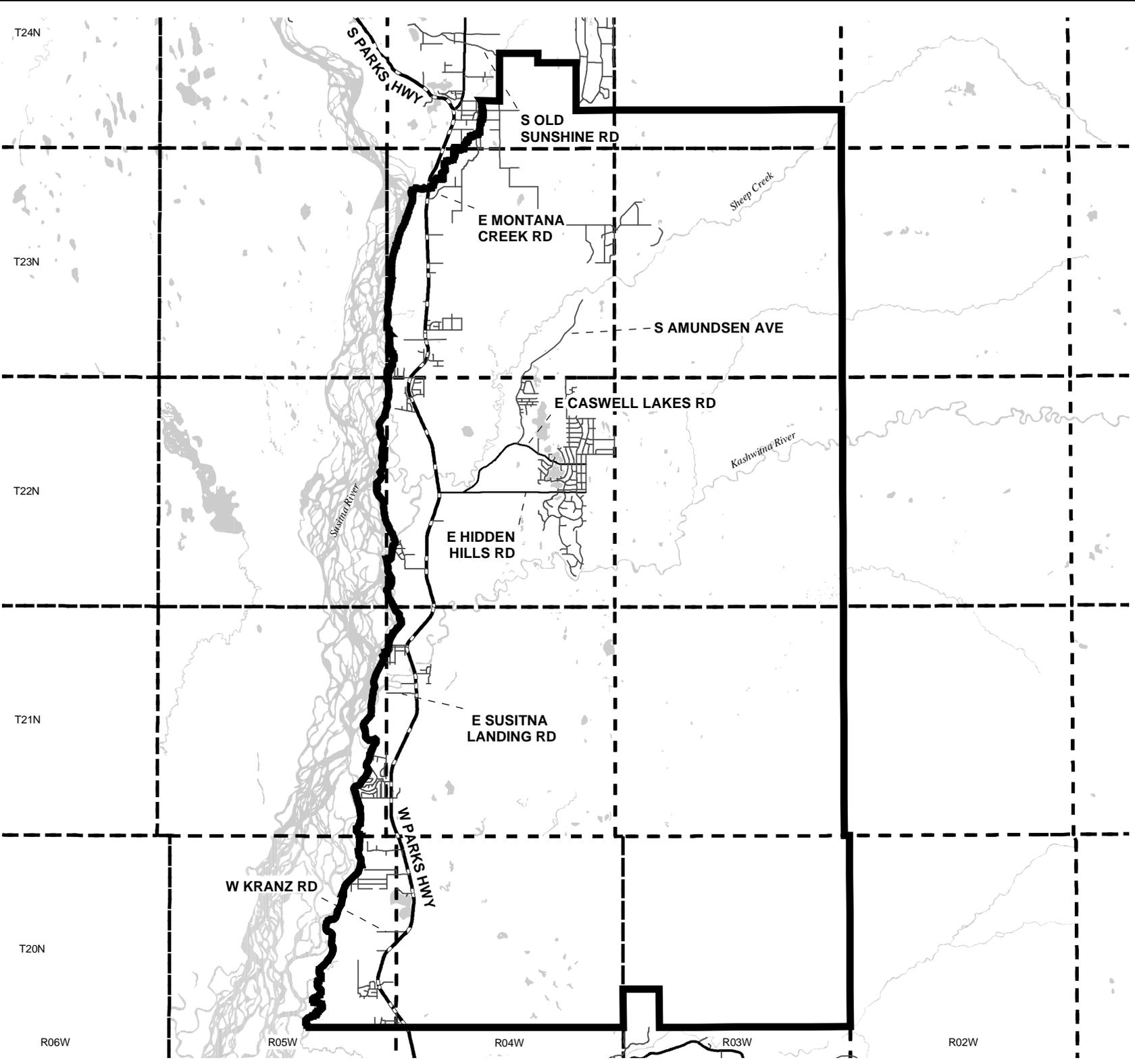
Maintenance is carried out by the two local road service districts. Maps on the following pages show the boundaries of these service areas. Road maintenance is a Y Community Council concern that came up late in the preparation of the YCC Area Comprehensive Plan. Issues raised include increasing the quality and frequency of road maintenance, and also increasing funding available for carrying out needed maintenance.

TALKEETNA  
ROAD SERVICE AREA  
#29



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CASWELL  
ROAD SERVICE AREA  
#15



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## MAJOR GOALS & STRATEGIES

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### Public Services & Facilities

*“It’s a balancing act – I live out here because I like the rural lifestyle, and I don’t want to see the area change. But... I’d really like better fire service, and maybe a good teen center, and a winter weight room would be great too...”*

#### Overview

The Y Community Council Area is a changing, unincorporated area located at the northern edge of the rapidly growing Matanuska-Susitna Borough. As an unincorporated area, the community relies on the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and partnerships with adjoining communities for many of the services and facilities it requires. In most categories, community services and facilities are fairly adequate for a small rural community. Where possible, residents want to make better use of existing facilities. At the same time, there is a general desire for further improvements.

During the weekend of April 25 – 26, 2003 over 130 residents and property owners of the YCC Area participated in the Gathering. During this community planning event, residents became aware of shared concerns by neighbors throughout the area. Many residents share the feeling that aspects of the area’s rural lifestyle – qualities that initially drew residents to live here - seem to be deteriorating as the area grows. By identifying appropriately-scaled community projects that are well-planned, sustainable and consider the overall goals and values of the community, new or improved public facilities and services can enhance the community rather than erode the reasons that residents choose to live here.

The focus of this chapter is to review existing community services and facilities and to identify strategies to improve these services and facilities, consistent with the goals identified below and the community’s values. Important considerations for public services and facilities in the YCC Area include identifying a parcel for a needed cemetery, addressing transportation needs, and working with the Borough on identifying land parcels that could be set-aside for public facilities. The YCC Area community also wants to make better use of its existing facilities and improve residents’ awareness of existing services available.

#### Public Services & Facilities Goals

- 1. Improve community services; top priorities include: fire service, land for a cemetery, emergency services, a community center, retaining land for key public facilities, securing a school site in Caswell Lakes, and establishing water spigots in the community.**
- 2. Improve the community’s capacity to pay to develop and operate needed community services and facilities.**

**GOAL I Improve community services; top priorities include: fire service, land for a cemetery, emergency services, a community center, retaining land for key public facilities, securing a school site in Caswell Lakes, and establishing water spigots in the community.**

**BACKGROUND & COMMUNITY VALUES**

There is currently no cemetery in the YCC Area. Fire protection is provided only in the north portion of the YCC Area. Road maintenance is provided in the YCC Area through the Talkeetna and Caswell Road service areas. The YCC Area relies on the Matanuska-Susitna Borough for a range of services including fire, solid waste disposal, emergency medical services, and schools. The Borough also serves as the area’s planning authority. Other area service providers include: Matanuska Electric Association (MEA) for electric service; Matanuska Telephone Association (MTA) for communication services; and the State of Alaska for police service. Sewer and water services are provided on an individual basis by homeowners. Typically, homes have septic systems and wells, although some homes have outhouses and haul water from local watering sources. Map 12 - “Services & Facilities” shows the location of several public facilities in the Y Community Council Area boundary.

Most YCC Area residents, like rural residents everywhere, accept the tradeoffs required when living in outlying, low population areas. They enjoy the pleasures of an attractive natural setting, the ready access to outdoor recreation amenities, and the absence of many of the headaches of city life. Most residents in the YCC Area accept that they will not receive the full range of public services and facilities found in more densely populated areas. However, they do expect that some services and facilities should be adequate to their needs, while other services should be excellent - regardless of where one lives. Specific areas of concern include education, fire protection and additional priorities outlined below.

**HOW? – MEANS TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**A. Fire Protection – Improve fire services in the YCC Area by 1) retaining public land for a future fire station in the Caswell Lakes/Sheep Creek area; 2) expanding the fire service area; 3) encouraging more property owners to volunteer for training; and 4) establishing funding for three new fire trucks.**

Fire service throughout the Borough is provided by specific fire service areas (FSA) under the authority of MSB Title 5. The Borough currently has eight fire service areas: Sutton, Butte, Greater Palmer, Wasilla-Lakes, Meadow Lakes, Big Lake, Willow and Talkeetna-Sunshine.<sup>1</sup> The cities of Palmer and Houston have separate city-operated and funded services. The size, population and mill rate of the fire service areas vary from community to community.



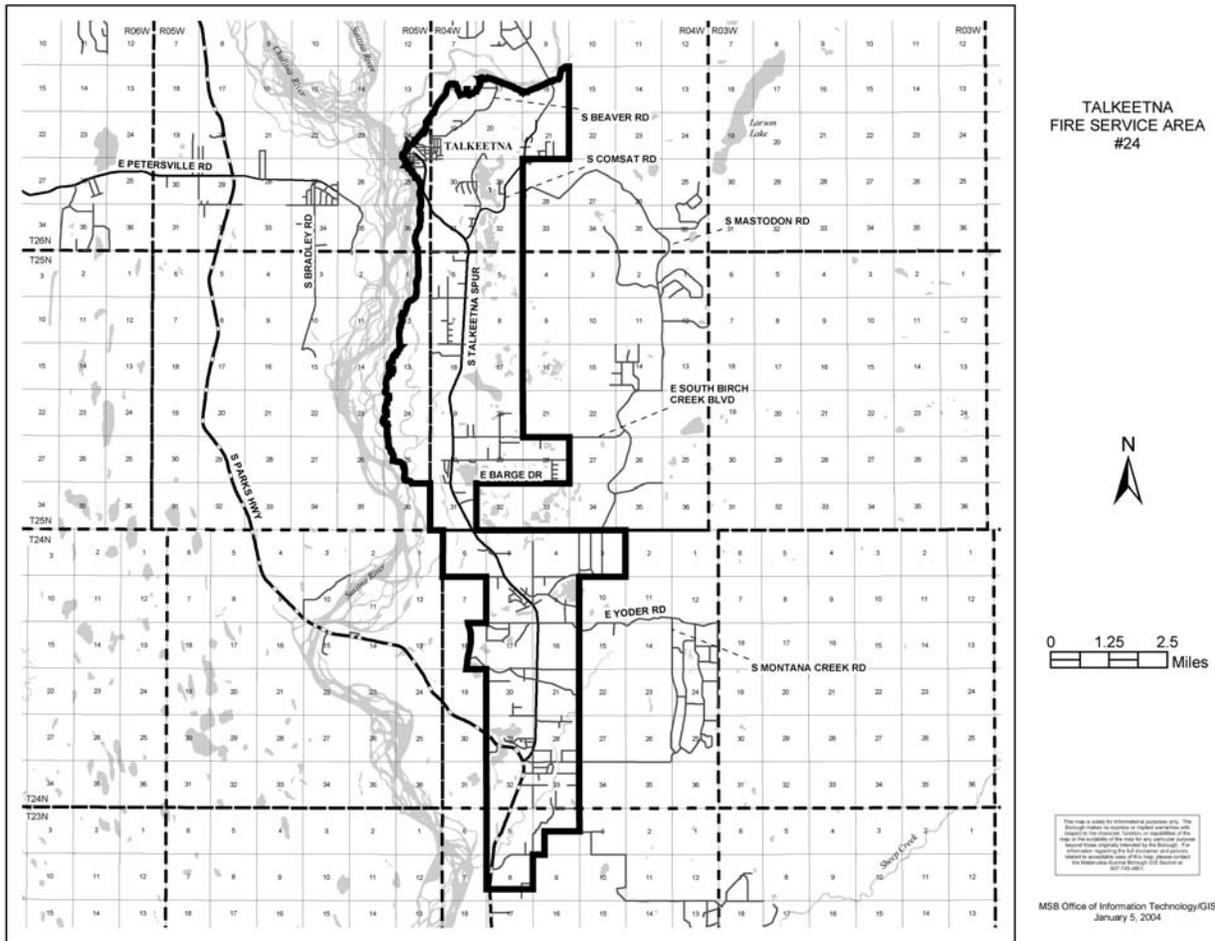
Talkeetna-Sunshine Volunteer Fire Department Vehicle

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<sup>1</sup> Trapper Creek also has an established FSA, although there is no fire department there and the Trapper Creek FSA is inactive. Therefore, the Trapper Creek Elementary School is served by the Talkeetna-Sunshine Volunteer Fire Department.

Currently in the YCC Area, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough provides fire service through the Talkeetna-Sunshine Fire Service Area (FSA) #24, located on the Parks Highway. The fire service area extends along the Talkeetna Spur Road from Talkeetna at the northern boundary to about three miles south of the Parks Highway/Talkeetna Spur “Y” intersection, and covers about two miles on either side of the Talkeetna Spur Road (see Talkeetna Fire Service Area #24 Map, below).

**Map 12: Talkeetna Fire Service Area (FSA) #24**



In addition to the Talkeetna-Sunshine Volunteer Fire Station, the Willow Fire Station is the closest fire station to the southern section of the Y Community Council Area, although the Willow Fire Service Area does not provide fire service in the Y Community Council Area.

As the YCC Area grows, fire protection is an immediate concern. Without adequate access to fire stations, hydrants and fire service response time, current residents risk serious fire risks, and future housing development can be stifled. Homeowners cannot obtain insurance without adequate fire response services. This lack of fire service can limit the quality for development - as many financing institutions will not offer financing without the development qualifying for insurance.

Currently, the entire southern portion of the YCC Area does not have fire service coverage. As the area continues to grow, fire service and a fire station will be needed that serves Caswell Lakes and

Sheep Creek. The Y Community Council needs to work with the Borough to identify a parcel of public land that can be retained and dedicated for a future fire station in the southern section of the YCC Area. Fire service needs in the southern portion of the YCC Area (i.e., Sheep Creek and Caswell Lakes residential areas) have been identified as the highest priority for Caswell Lakes residents. The Y Community Council has begun researching options available for expanding fire service. The key to this assessment is the cost of service versus the revenue the area can generate. Volunteers will also be needed. Based on a preliminary evaluation by a local resident, it appears there is insufficient assessed property value in the Caswell Lakes area today to generate the revenues needed to fund a fire service district. This should be re-evaluated as the area continues to grow, with the expectation that as more homes are built, and existing homes are improved, a threshold will be reached where forming a district becomes practical. At that point, a couple of options (shown below) have been suggested to address this need.

*"I think the different north and south 'ends' of the community have different needs. Up north we have fire protection and they don't. Would they like to have that? I think so, but I'm not sure they have property taxes to support all these services."*

OPTION #1: Join an existing Fire Service Area (as some residents of Montana Creek Road have recently done). Encourage contiguous property owners in the southern portions of the YCC Area to petition to be added to the existing FSA (either Talkeetna-Sunshine FSA or the Willow FSA). As this continues, and as more contiguous property owners support the need for fire service and incrementally are annexed into the existing FSA, the FSA will expand. Ultimately, a new sub-station of either the Talkeetna-Sunshine FSA or the Willow FSA is needed to serve those in the Caswell Lakes and Sheep Creek area.

OPTION #2: Establish a new Fire Service Area to serve residents and establish a new fire station located on the Parks Highway that serves properties throughout the area north of the Willow FSA and south of the Talkeetna-Sunshine FSA serving Caswell Lakes and Sheep Creek areas. Again, for this to be possible, a threshold will need to be reached to afford fire service by residents in the area.

As a more near-term solution, the Y Community Council may want to evaluate the usefulness of the "fire department in a box" program suggested during the November 2004 Workshop. Another suggestion made at the November 2004 Workshop was to annex the road to be covered by fire service in order to encourage more properties along the road to eventually be annexed. The Council may need to evaluate this alternative's feasibility.

Volunteers for a future new fire station or expanded fire service area can be trained through the Talkeetna-Sunshine fire department. A future fire station located in the southern portion of the YCC Area could be manned by volunteers in Caswell Lakes and Sheep Creek areas. Encouraging property owners to be trained as volunteer fire fighters will further support the fire service needs of the entire YCC Area. Eventually, there will be a need to develop an emergency response plan that addresses emergency evacuation.

In addition to the need for expanding the existing FSA in the YCC Area, the Talkeetna-Sunshine Fire Department needs new fire trucks. Currently, the department has two fire trucks and one rescue truck that are all approaching, or have already reached, the 20 year mark (ages are 20, 19, and 18 years). The department risks losing its current Insurance Service Organization (ISO) rating once the trucks are more than 20 years old. Therefore, the department has an immediate need to identify

funding for three new vehicles to maintain its ISO rating. The average cost of a new fire truck is approximately \$160,000. Funding is needed over the next three years (one fire truck per year) to effectively maintain the Department's ISO rating. The Assistance to Firefighters grants program makes funds available to Alaskan communities in need of assistance. For more information, see Appendix E.

### **B. Reserving Land Parcels – Cemetery is a top priority for the YCC Area.**

Currently there is no cemetery in the YCC Area. It is very important to the residents of the YCC Area that local land be dedicated as a cemetery. The Y Community Council should continue to work with the Borough to identify an appropriate parcel (not located in a flood plain) that can be used for this purpose as well as identifying other parcels to be dedicated for specific future uses such as a fire station and a future elementary school with appropriate surrounding facilities in the Caswell Lakes area. Dedicating parcels for specific future uses will improve the community's ability to properly locate these facilities and plan future development effectively.

Some parcels that have been initially suggested by the Planning Team for further consideration include parcels labeled on the "Recommended Uses for Public Parcels" map in the Recreation & Open Space chapter as follows:

- Parcel B – a Borough-owned parcel in the Sunshine area suggested for a possible cemetery location. Federally-owned land should also be considered as a potential location for a cemetery.
- Parcel H – a Borough-owned parcel suggested for a possible future school.
- Parcel R – a State-owned parcel suggested for a possible future elementary school site in the Caswell Lakes area.

### **C. Youth Services & Adult Education– Improve services available to youth and in the YCC Area by 1) establishing a youth center as a component of the proposed community center; 2) identifying options for establishing a regional vocational-education program for youth and adults; 3) improving transportation services for youth in the community to better access existing services available to them; 4) improve childcare services; and 5) improve pre-school services available for very young children.**

Youth services are also a top priority for the Y Community Council Area. Establishing a youth center in the proposed community center building will improve opportunities for youth throughout the YCC Area. It will provide a meeting place for youth; opportunities for leadership and skill building; opportunities for exploring individual talents in areas such as arts, music, sports and crafts; and a safe, positive place for kids to spend time. Job listings for youth can be posted in the youth center. Generally, the center should be a fun place for kids to go and to offer ways for youth to be actively involved in the community. One option for getting assistance in operating the youth center includes partnering with the Boys and Girls Club.

As part of the community center, a vocational education program is needed both for youth and adults. The Alaska Job Corps Center located in Palmer is one model that offers a wide range of services for at-risk youth between the ages of 16 and 24. Although the Job Corps Center in Palmer offers a much wider range of services than would be feasible for the YCC Area, a satellite branch of this Job Corps Center could provide valuable training and services to the region's youth. Examples

of services offered at the Job Corps Center in Palmer include basic education, vocational training, employment skills training, parenting skills, child care services, placement services, recreation and avocation, as well as social skills and leadership training. Eventually, a satellite or mini-campus may be needed both for high school students and adults for advanced placement as well as job training.

In addition to vocational education, the YCC Area wants to encourage youth involvement through programs such as a youth conservation corps and a youth mentorship program. Residents want to encourage youth opportunities for civic involvement through community service activities and outreach.

Childcare and services to very young children are also high priorities. There is a need to improve the availability of childcare services throughout the YCC Area, and especially in the Caswell Lakes area. In the near-term, transportation to existing facilities can be better utilized to improve access to childcare services in the YCC Area. There is a non-profit childcare program leasing space from the clinic for childcare services. Funding for busing or a shuttle service is needed.

Many YCC Area families home-school their young children. To supplement parents' ability to provide enriching educational opportunities for their children, resources in the proposed community center should include an area specifically for young children to play; have supervised access to computer education programs designed for young children; and provide resources and an area for parents to educate their children in subjects such as the arts, math, reading, writing, science, etc. There are a variety of service programs that serve as excellent models for the YCC Area. Examples of community pre-schools include the Anchorage Cooperative Preschool and the Rabbit Creek Community Preschool. For-profit preschools include Garden Montessori, Puffin Heights Montessori School, Inc., Aurora Waldorf School of Alaska, and the Waldorf Education Association of Anchorage School. Information about starting and running cooperative schools and related resources are available through the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC). In the state, NAEYC offices are located in Anchorage and Fairbanks. Eventually, the YCC Area may consider establishing a charter school.

In addition to home-schooling, families also utilize the pre-school in Talkeetna. This is a resource that adequately serves the educational needs of young children in the YCC Area. However, there is an immediate need throughout the YCC Area for improved transportation services for young children to better access the pre-school in Talkeetna. Funding for transportation to the pre-school is an immediate priority for the YCC Area.

#### **D. Health Services – Improve mental health services and emergency medical services in the YCC Area.**

Existing health care services in the YCC Area include the Sunshine Community Health Center (SCHC) located at the northwest corner of the YCC Area boundary. The SCHC provides health services to the entire Upper-Susitna Valley. The substantial expansion to the clinic was completed in 2003. The clinic does not offer overnight medical services, however there are long-term plans for eventually adding an urgent care wing to the clinic. Besides the Sunshine Clinic, other health facilities and services in the region include the Talkeetna Denali Family Medical Clinic (in Talkeetna) and two health clinics in Willow: the Heart of Willow Clinic that is open Tuesdays thru Saturdays from 10 am to 7 pm; and a SCHC satellite clinic that is open five days a week/eight hours each day. There is also a part-time mid-level provider located in Houston. Larger regional hospitals include the Mat-Su Regional Medical Center in Palmer and additional hospitals in Anchorage.



The Sunshine Community Health Center

Residents who participated in the November 2004 Workshop identified the need to educate and inform the community about what health care services are currently offered in the YCC Area and those that are not. For example, residents needing physical therapy travel to Wasilla. There is need to have these services provided locally, perhaps by a specialist who makes home physical therapy visits. An outreach service would improve the ability to respond quickly to seniors and disabled individuals in the YCC Area. In addition, there is a need for emergency care in the YCC Area.

Ambulance services in the YCC Area include the Talkeetna Ambulance Service, the Trapper Creek Ambulance Service, and the Willow Ambulance Service. There is also an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Station #112 located at mile 97 of the Parks Highway. Generally, there are medical services available, however it is important that these services are coordinated to respond to emergency medical needs area-wide. There is a need for improved emergency medical services in Caswell Lakes. One suggestion for expanding the ambulance service response area was to activate the Sunshine Station – which has an ambulance and is located in the public safety building. The ambulance service could serve the northern YCC Area, being administered by the Talkeetna Fire Service Area #4.

The Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) are volunteers and equipment assistance is provided by the Borough. The department has two emergency response vehicles and two ambulances (one in the YCC Area and one in Talkeetna). Frequently, patients need to be transported to Palmer for emergency care. During a public meeting in the YCC Area, the community recommended that an agreement be established between the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Emergency Medical Services in the YCC Area, and the Sunshine Community Health Clinic to address less emergent situations which would relieve the need to be transported to Palmer for some patients. The Sunshine Community Health Clinic also has long-term plans for a new urgent care wing. This will also improve urgent care services in the YCC Area.

There is also a need for improved and expanded services such as mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse needs in the YCC Area. This is challenging as state funding for developmental disabilities services and mental health services has declined in recent years. Current providers that offer some services in the YCC Area include Mat-Su Services for Children and Adults, Access Alaska, Hope Resources, LINK and Ready Care, and some mental health services through the SCHC's behavioral health program. Although these services are available, there are limitations

to the services provided. Options for improving developmental disabilities and other mental health services in the area include establishing a system for transportation between the YCC Area and service providers in the south, and, over time, working to expand the services that could be provided at the Sunshine Clinic, and through partnerships with the providers listed above.

At the regional level, a borough-wide study on rural health is being conducted throughout the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Residents of the YCC Area can and should actively participate in this study to ensure that YCC Area health needs and issues are effectively identified in the regional study. This regional study is an excellent opportunity to share the rural health needs throughout the Borough to funding agencies and policy-makers.

#### **E. Police – Improve local policing services through a neighborhood watch program throughout the YCC Area.**

Currently, there are no local police services or facilities in the YCC Area. The State of Alaska provides State Trooper services in the region. The nearest State Trooper Post is located at mile .3 of the Talkeetna Spur Road. A police department could be constructed in the YCC Area as an addition to the existing Public Service Building (PSB 11-2) since this building was designed to have another public facility that has not yet been constructed.

During a ten month period, the Mayor’s Blue Ribbon Task Force on Police Powers conducted a preliminary study that resulted with a recommendation on June 16, 2004 that the Borough adopts police powers and contracts with the Alaska State Troopers for the provision of additional police services.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the Task Force also recommended that the Borough support ancillary measures, establish a centralized neighborhood watch office, and collaborate with community groups to develop and fund programs that emphasize prevention, education, intervention, and treatment. YCC Area residents can and should participate in public meetings of the MSB Task Force to communicate the YCC Area public safety needs and to encourage a police station to be located in the YCC Area.

The YCC Area is also interested in starting a neighborhood watch program to address immediate and ongoing local area needs. Resources for establishing a neighborhood watch program are listed in Appendix C. Other recommendations made during the November 2004 Workshop include exploring the feasibility of establishing a program equivalent to the Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) program that is done in Native villages throughout rural Alaska.

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<sup>2</sup> Matanuska-Susitna Borough Mayor’s Blue Ribbon Task Force on Police Powers, Resolution No. 04-01 (see Appendix F).

**F. Adult Education Programs – Establish an adult education program and vocational education technical school as a component of the proposed community center.**

Adult education programs are a top priority for the Y Community Council Area. These could be included as a component of the proposed community center. The Mat-Su Community College in Palmer may be an appropriate partner for establishing an adult education program in the community center. The Y Community Council will need to identify alternatives available for operating and managing the program, identifying specific educational programs of interest to residents, and equipment and resources required for offering these services. At a minimum, by establishing internet access in the library of the community center, adults can easily access a variety of distance learning programs available online and through the University of Alaska. An additional suggestion is to re-establish the community schools program.

Some additional recommendations made during the November 2004 Workshop include adding a satellite University of Alaska extension program in the YCC Area. This proposed UA extension program should be designed to provide vocational education technical skills to both adults and those still in high school to encourage advanced placement as well as job training.

**G. Recreation Facilities – Improve use of existing facilities for indoor and outdoor recreation in the YCC Area and plan for future recreation facilities.**

The YCC Area residents would like to improve access and use of existing recreational opportunities available through the existing high school indoor facilities by establishing evening family-use hours that adhere to school policies. In addition, there are long-term needs to establish recreational opportunities (such as a ball field and indoor pool) as part of the proposed community center. Other future outdoor recreation opportunities currently being planned include a shooting range at mile 94 of the Parks Highway that is being organized by the Upper-Su Shooters Association (a private non-profit).

**H. Public Water Supply – Improve the monitoring of water quality throughout the YCC Area. Ensure adequate availability and quality of public watering spigots in the YCC Area.**

Many year-round residents in the YCC Area have individual wells, septic tanks, and complete plumbing. Seasonal-use homes haul water and use outhouses. Public watering points should be installed at Kashwitna, Caswell, Sunshine, and the Sheep Creek spring. Residents use the Sheep Creek spring to collect water, and although the water quality is very good, there is a general concern by residents for the need to maintain the quality and accessibility of the community's water sources. A water-quality monitoring program to evaluate water quality should be initiated to ensure ongoing safety of the watering points. Community volunteers can be trained to test water in their neighborhoods. Two trainers are already residents of the YCC Area, however they need volunteers who are willing to take part in the training are needed.

Ultimately a water supply and disbursement plan is needed that considers both the current and long-term needs of the community while ensuring water quality. Future land use regulations and transportation planning should address the need for new sub-division development standards for supplying water to small lots.

## **I. Management of Uncontrolled Dumping - Improve the management of uncontrolled dumping throughout the YCC Area.**

Currently, the Borough operates a refuse transfer station in the YCC Area at mile 102 of the Parks Highway. There is also a solid waste transfer station located at mile .3 of the Talkeetna Spur Road. A privately-owned collection service is available to YCC Area residents.

Trash dumping and especially junk car dumping are growing problems in the YCC Area and around the Borough. Examples of two problem spots include traditional, but informal, camping and fishing areas, such as along Montana Creek. Dumping in public places has led to problem spots that need to be cleaned-up. Residents would like to identify alternatives to blocking these areas off to prevent further dumping. The proper disposal of solid waste should also be encouraged, through enforcement such as junk yard permitting. In addition, there is an increasing need for portable outhouses and wildlife-resistant garbage collection bins at recreation areas.

During the November 2004 Workshop residents of the YCC Area suggested that an incentive program be developed that addresses this problem as well as dumping of large appliances. One approach would be establishing a free dumping day to encourage the proper disposal of garbage and large items. Residents also want to improve clean-up efforts by establishing a community watch program and creating fees for yard junk, and establishing fines for public junking if the problem persists.

As the Y Community Council Area grows, a collection service may also be warranted to reduce problems associated with trash dumping, such as polluting water sources, creating unsanitary conditions in the campgrounds, and creating bear attractors in publicly-used areas. Residents have also expressed a desire to establish a comprehensive recycling program in the YCC Area. To do this, collection sites are needed as is delivery to the recycling center by a local provider. This could be established through a volunteer effort with funding or as a local business venture.

## **J. Community Center – Establish a community center in the Y Community Council Area.**

*“I love the idea of a community center with youth center, daycare, library and options for ‘business incubation’ and ‘out-sourced’ jobs.”*

Another high priority for YCC Area residents is establishing a community center located in the proposed town. To every extent, residents want to maximize use of existing facilities and design the community center to best complement those existing facilities, such as the library in Trapper Creek, the post office in Talkeetna, and the pre-school in Talkeetna. A

community center will provide greatly needed space for community meetings, functions, and as a general place for bringing people from the community together. Residents of the YCC Area would like to see the following services planned for the community center building:

- Improved facilities for holding community-wide events and having a place for meetings
- Indoor recreational opportunities that are reasonable to operate and maintain
- Developed outdoor recreational opportunities such as a ball field, community park, and access to trails
- A post office
- A library where parents can access resources for home-schooling their young children

- Youth services as identified under strategy “B” in this chapter
- Adult education programs
- A business center serving as a resource to local entrepreneurs and businesses with a business incubator and out-sourcing jobs services
- Y Community Council Office
- A satellite office of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough/ Legislative Information Office

*“I am interested in beginning a Child Development Center but I need ideas for start-up and on-going costs.”*

In order to cover the operations and maintenance costs of a community center, the YCC Area will evaluate options for generating income. One option is to form a non-profit organization under the Community Council, and establishing the non-profit with the sole purpose of running the center. A benefit of this approach is having access to grant funding - although such funding cannot be relied on for operations costs. The non-profit would need to maintain a link with community council who would ensure the proper oversight. There would also need to be good community involvement as board members on the non-profit organization established to run the center. This alternative requires a lot of volunteer time; it is not a guarantee of funding sources; and is a large responsibility for a small organization to take on - this may be seen a risky investment for potential funders.

Another alternative is to have the MSB own the facility. Advantages of this approach include: 1) the MSB is a larger organization, so the risks are relatively less, even if the community (under a non-profit) acts as the manager. This would remove risk for funders and insurers. In addition there is access to the Borough Assembly for requesting operating funds. A disadvantage of this alternative is that there is less community ownership, oversight, and the MSB might not want to take on ownership of the facility.

An additional alternative is to incorporate as a city and own the building: With this option, it would allow the Council to 1) gain access to tax revenue to sustain the facility; 2) have access to better insurance rates through Municipal sources; and 3) improve the potential for bonding (although probably minimal); and 4) establish a sustainable operator, which will be attractive to funders. Using this option requires the YCC Area to incorporate, which can be a lengthy process.

In order to gain funding for the construction and management of a community center, there needs to be a non-profit or a governing entity for most grant funds. In addition they need to demonstrate a solid business plan that is tied to building design and uses. Each space must be able to cover its costs. The project must find a balance between what the community wants and what it can afford. The Community Facilities Planning Workbook is a useful tool for planning multi-use community facilities (see Appendix D).

**K. Post Office – Establish a post office in the YCC Area as a part of the proposed community center and/or in the town site.**

Currently, residents go to Talkeetna to pick-up or send mail, which adequately serves the YCC Area residents. There is also a secure mail drop box at Moores’ Hardware. As the YCC Area grows, establishing a post office as a component of the community center would be a preferred alternative for addressing postal needs of the community. Other alternatives include establishing secure mail drop boxes at locations such as the Tesoro station, H&H, in Caswell or



Mailboxes of residents in the Y area

other local facility. A near-term alternative to the existing unsecured mailboxes along the roadside would be to install U.S. Postal Service cluster boxes that lock as is seen in several residential communities in Anchorage and Eagle River.

**L. Library – Establish a library in the Y Community Council Area as part of the proposed community center and/or in the town site.**

Currently, the existing library in Willow, Talkeetna and Trapper Creek adequately serves the needs of those in the YCC Area. As the area grows, a local library will be needed. The proposed community center may be the best location for a library. Establishing the library as part of the community center would complement a variety of other proposed uses. The Museum and Library Services Administration has grant programs for rural libraries.

A near-term suggestion provided during the November 2004 Workshop was to establish a book mobile that is linked to the existing libraries. A possible business opportunity would be to open a used book store in the YCC Area.

**M. Electric Services – Expand electrical service to existing subdivisions in the YCC Area and require electrical service for new development projects.**

The electric operator in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough is Matanuska Electric Association (MEA). MEA's service districts include Eagle River, Palmer, Wasilla, and Big Lake. MEA provides electric services in the YCC Area. The power source is hydro with a rate of about 11.9 cents per kilowatt hour. MEA periodically funds projects to extend power to unimproved areas. Neighborhoods can apply to MEA. As existing sub-divisions grow, electrical service will need to be expanded to those areas. In addition, the YCC Area will need to have standards in place that require electrical services established for new residential development areas. The Y Community Council will want to work with MEA and the Borough to pursue grants and projects that will establish electric power systems.

**N. Road Service – Establish a road service plan to 1) upgrade sub-standard and high-maintenance roads; 2) designate collector road options for paving; and 3) establish a hierarchy of roads and plan for rebuilding and maintenance.**

See Circulation chapter.



Along the Parks Highway



The Y Bridge

**O. Schools – Improve transportation to schools that YCC Area youth attend.**

The Y Community Council Area is located in the Matanuska-Susitna School District. Schools in the District are operated by the Borough. One school is located in the YCC Area – the Susitna Valley High School (grades 7 thru 12). At Susitna Valley High, there are about 210 students and 16 teachers.



*“A middle school, separate from the high school, will be needed as the population grows.”*

The existing schools adequately serve youth in the YCC Area, however there is a need for improved transportation from areas in the Y Community Council Area to schools they attend (especially the pre-school in Talkeetna and for field trips). Improving transportation will also require protective portable shelters at bus stops, especially for young children. Residents have discussed getting volunteers and support from the Borough and local businesses for supplies to build bus stop shelters for the children. A volunteer program is also needed for parents to stay with children at the bus stops, to pick children up, and develop collection spots. As the YCC Area grows, there may come a point where there is an overflow of the YCC Area and Talkeetna school capacities, and at such a time there may be the need for a new school in the YCC Area. A land parcel should be dedicated for a future elementary school with adequate surrounding facilities in the Caswell Lakes area that is centrally located both for youth

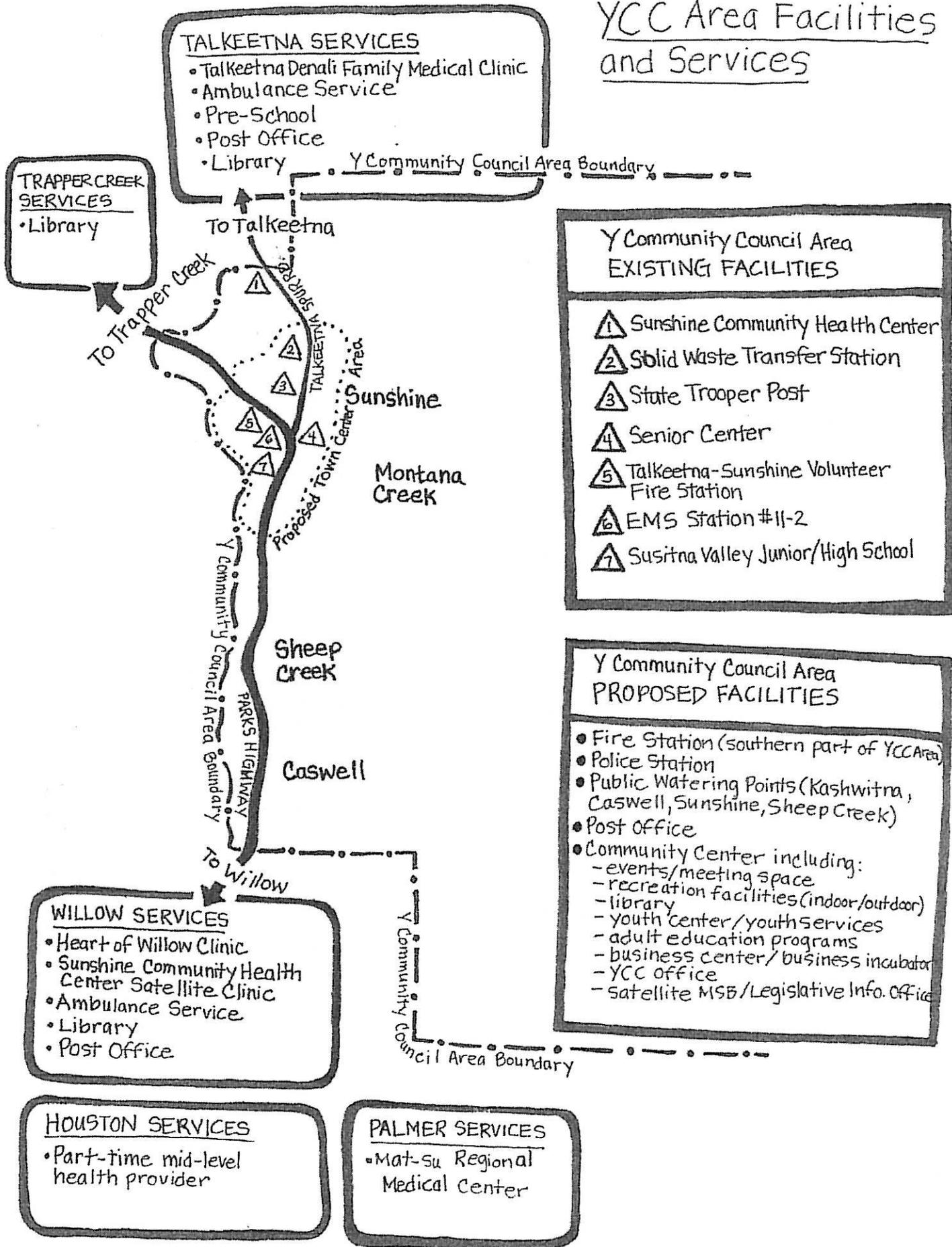


Susitna Valley High School

and for community activities. The current school location makes participating in after-school activities difficult.

Residents would like to improve their ability to utilize the school for community activities – perhaps a “joint use” facility. Activities such as group fitness, meetings, clubs, art programs, and cooking classes could be held at the school. Please see YCC Area Facilities & Services Map, located on the following page.

# YCC Area Facilities and Services



## **GOAL 2 Improve the community’s capacity to pay to develop and operate needed community services and facilities.**

### **HOW? – MEANS TO REACH GOAL**

With many of the strategies identified in this chapter, an entity is required to own, operate, and manage the recommended programs, services, and facilities. The Y Community Council is currently evaluating several options for increasing their capacity to pay for, develop, and operate the community services and facilities that are identified in this plan. Making this decision will greatly influence how the Council pursues the strategies proposed in this chapter. The chapter in this plan titled “Leadership and Communication” identifies alternatives that the Council is currently considering.

Some suggestions made during the November 2004 Workshop include having subdivisions pay impact fees for new lots as they’re developed to establish funding for additional demands on public services. Another suggestion was to identify guidelines for larger subdivisions to develop an electric power plan that specifies how the subdivision will accommodate its power generation needs. As with many services needed or desired, a homeowner’s association could charge a minimum fee to provide modest services area-wide and to monitor and enforce junk removal policies throughout the designated homeowner’s association area.

(Also see Leadership and Communication chapter.)

## MAJOR GOALS & STRATEGIES

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### Economic Development

*“I don’t think most people come out here for the jobs.”*

#### Overview

The YCC Area evolved from an area of wilderness homesteads into what it is today: a road-accessible, residential area of approximately 1,100 people, with a range of roadside stores and services. Tourism and construction are the areas largest private job sectors, with most jobs being seasonal. Over 40% of those employed in the area work in the retail trade industry or the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food service industries. Many of the residents are self-employed in home-based or small business activities such as lodging, guiding and charter services. There are also a handful of small farms and opportunities for small-scale timber activities.

In setting the stage for discussing future economic development planning in the YCC Area, it’s important to reflect on why people want to live here. Population and employment statistics from the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau data show that 956 people live in the YCC Area. Of that total population, the potential workforce includes 711 residents. Census data show 253 people in the Y area as employed, leaving more than half of the potential workforce without regular employment. As one community resident eloquently points out: “I don’t think most people come out here for the jobs.”

The area’s economic profile may be on the brink of significant change, driven by the steady growth in population and second homes in the north borough region. The Sunshine area is emerging as a service center for the northern section of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. A number of new businesses have recently been established. It is likely that this trend will continue, as businesses such as auto repair, banking, or equipment rentals open to serve local needs previously reached only by driving an hour to the south. Residents are taking steps to plan for these changes to ensure that the community retains its rural look and feel, both for residents and visitors.

The community is blessed with a rich diversity of skilled residents. Locals enjoy the freedoms of a rural setting while having road access to the services of larger communities. Most greatly value the area’s scenic environmental resources and are less interested in attracting large-scale economic development. This sentiment is clarified by another well-stated quote from a resident of the Y Community: “Jobs – pretty great to have and absolutely necessary, however, it’s unfair to our children to develop so much (for the sake of making money) that our children can’t enjoy this rural lifestyle. Some types of jobs just won’t be available here, nor the number of jobs as compared to more populous areas.”

## **Economic Development Goals**

A revised list of economic goals is presented below. This list reflects input from the 2003 community gathering, the draft “Issues and Goals Report,” comments at the spring 2004 Community Workshop, and ongoing discussions with the Y Community Council Planning Team.

- 1. Guide responsible development to provide jobs and business opportunities for locals, while retaining community character.**
- 2. Encourage development of a diversified local economy, both seasonal and year-round, that matches community values, including well-managed tourism, locally-produced products, local-serving commercial activities, and cottage industry.**
- 3. Designate and maintain outdoor recreation resources (open space, trails, lakes, etc.) for future generations.**
- 4. Strengthen and promote the identity of the Y Community Council Area and its inclusive neighborhoods, facilities, and services.**

## **GOAL I Guide responsible development to provide jobs and business opportunities for locals, while retaining community character.**

### **HOW? – ACHIEVING RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT**

#### **A. Economic Development Forum – Organize an local forum where business owners can meet and discuss business needs, niches, local/regional linkages, and ways to strengthen the local economy while maintaining the community character.**

Establishing an Economic Development Forum will encourage business leaders and those influencing economic development in the YCC Area to define their shared vision and work together to accomplish the economic development goals of this comprehensive plan. Such a group can bring together a wide range of organizations and business leaders to discuss common issues, advocate for local businesses, and advise the Y Community Council (or other governing body) on issues relating to the development of the YCC Area's economic interests. The organization will represent regional and local governance, businesses, co-ops, vocational and educational organizations, volunteers and community representatives, and representatives from specific sectors such as agriculture, industrial, tourism, home-based businesses, etc.

The members of the forum should identify and agree upon a clear statement of priorities to be addressed during a specific time frame, consistent with the community comprehensive plan. This will provide the framework for an action plan that focuses on areas of greatest importance to current and planned economic activity. The forum should meet regularly (at least quarterly) each year and form sub-groups that carry-out key activities and meet more regularly.

The forum could meet in the proposed community center.

#### **B. Community Resources Directory – Improve and continue to use the Community Resources Directory that lists all businesses, services, and facilities located in the Y Community Council Area.**

Most visitors, and many residents, are unaware of the many different services, facilities and businesses available in the YCC Area. A YCC Area Community Resources Directory could be presented in a variety of ways: a brochure, signs, and/or a community website.

The community of Gustavus provides a well-developed example of the electronic version of this type of directory. Gustavus is more focused on tourism and promotion than is likely to be the case for the Y Community Council Area, but the website (<http://www.gustavus.com/>) gives a good sense of how much a community can do to describe businesses, community events, community facilities, etc.

**C. Business Incubator – Create a business incubator in the proposed community center to support local start-up and home-based business opportunities.**

For the Y Community Council Area, a business incubator can provide space and basic services (e.g., phone, copier, fax, internet, furnishings, etc.) to allow entrepreneurs the opportunity to start a business without large start-up costs of leasing space and purchasing furnishings. The space can be used for a variety of types of small business operations. The intent of the business incubator is to encourage local economic development. The business incubator provides the space, and the entrepreneur starts the business. Depending on the type of business and space available, a business incubator can be used to incubate several start-up businesses simultaneously. By strategically locating business incubator spaces in the community center building, start-up business ventures can

benefit from potential customers that are initially attracted to the community center for a variety of other activities.

Business “incubators” are a common strategy employed by local and state governments and non-profit organizations to help small businesses get started and grow. Information below, from the State of Wisconsin gives more details:

(<http://www.commerce.state.wi.us/MT/MT-COM-2610.html#INTRODUCTION%20TO%20INCUBATORS>)

*Business incubators are facilities that provide small, entrepreneurial businesses with affordable space and shared support and business development services, such as financing, marketing, and management. Incubators can play a nurturing role in helping young businesses survive and grow during the start-up period when they are most financially vulnerable.*

*Incubators come in many formats, with different objectives. They may be:*

- Public or not-for-profit incubators, sponsored by government and nonprofit organizations, whose primary purpose is to promote economic development.
- Private incubators, run by venture and seed capital investment groups, or by corporations and real estate development partnerships. These incubators generally seek a return on their investment, often through a stake in the firm, further development, royalties, etc.
- Academic-related incubators, which share characteristics of the first two types, but also have objectives in faculty development, and creating business spin-offs from faculty research.
- Public/private incubators, which are joint efforts between government or other non-profit agencies and a private developer. These offer the advantage that government funding can often be secured to support private sector expertise and financing.

**D. Internet Services – Continue to improve internet service in the area to create additional opportunities for local businesses, schools, and residents.**

Currently, internet service is available to residents in the YCC Area. There are two high speed fiber optics cables running through the YCC Area: one is along the Parks Highway; the other is along the Alaska Railroad right-of-way. High-speed internet services continue to be a need throughout the YCC Area. As new facilities are constructed, such as the community center building, high-speed internet should be planned.

**E. Town Center – Utilize the town center to improve opportunities for local businesses and home-based businesses to market and sell their products/services.**

Promote the Sunshine area as a hub serving the shopping, public services, and public needs for residents and visitors to the northern section of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. Utilize the proposed Chamber of Commerce to assist local and home-based businesses market their products in the town center. For example, the town center could offer a store or space for local farmers and craftspeople to sell their products.

**F. Local, Small-Scale & Home-Based Businesses – Develop land use policies that actively support (and do not unreasonably discourage) local, small-scale and home-based businesses.**

The YCC Area already hosts a range of local small businesses, several based in homes. Existing businesses under this category include a wide range of ventures including professional services, construction, service providers, tourism operations, arts/crafts sales, and others. The comprehensive plan endorses the value of local, small-scale and home-based businesses and recognizes such businesses as a good fit with the community's desire to provide economic opportunity while maintaining the community's attractive rural character. For example, creating a local arts and crafts co-op is one way to support business opportunities for certain small-scale home-based businesses in the YCC Area.

Policies in the land use section of this plan encourage these activities to continue. Land use policies also set rules to ensure all types of businesses continue to be good neighbors and maintain community character. Examples include rules about signage, hours of operation, screening storage areas, etc.

## **GOAL 2 Encourage development of a diversified local economy, both seasonal and year-round, that matches community values, including locally-produced products, small-scale commercial activities, and cottage industry.**

### **BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES**

As is described in the introduction to this chapter, the community wants to promote a local economy that meets the needs of residents, takes advantage of opportunities to benefit from visitor spending, and is stable because it builds from diverse sources.

### **HOW? – MEANS TO REACH GOAL**

#### **A. “Made in Sunshine, Alaska”, “Made in Caswell Lakes, Alaska” – Promote locally-produced products through an area-wide marketing strategy.**

Utilize the Economic Development Forum to encourage sales and marketing of locally-produced products within the community, to the region, and statewide. As part of this plan, encourage local commercial businesses to buy locally, hire locally, utilize local services, and serve local needs.

#### **B. Summer and Winter Events – Promote events to statewide or regional niche markets that fit with community values.**

Events can bring a range of community benefits – increased spending to benefit local businesses, stronger community identity, the chance to raise money to support local organizations such as the community council, and the fun of participation for residents. Gustavus provides a good example of an unincorporated community using a range of community events to support community programs.

Possible local events meeting these criteria include:

Trail-based activities such as dog mushing, cross-country skiing, trail runs, marathons, and bike races

Craft fairs

Others? Discuss with community

#### **C. Business Signage - Improve the ability of businesses to post appropriately-scaled signs that clearly identify their location to those driving by.**

See Land Use chapter.

#### **D. Resource Development - Support development of appropriate, well-managed resource development activities, in particular agriculture and small scale/value-added forestry products.**

The YCC Area is currently home to a range of small scale agricultural activities – from gardens for a single family, to small scale farms selling hay vegetables, and animal products to local and statewide markets. Much of the area is forested, and while trees are relatively small diameter and slow growing, forest resources offer the opportunity for materials for log cabins, small scale lumber operations, firewood and value added products like furniture. There is also some potential for non-timber forest products, such as diamond willow, or products used in health care such as devils club.

The land use chapter of this plan outlines strategies to encourage these activities to continue, while not creating adverse environmental or off-site impacts. Other actions to promote agriculture and

forestry include establishing a town center that can be an outlet for local goods, and perhaps a regular farmers or crafts market. Such a market might operate weekly through summer, serve the entire north Borough, and offer goods to both residents and visitors.

**E. Well-Managed Tourism – Encourage amounts, locations and types of tourism development that provide economic opportunities and help maintain and enhance community values.**

Tourism strategies for the YCC Area focused on maximizing benefits and minimizing adverse impacts are outlined below; more details are presented in the recreation section:

- Encourage trail activities (hiking, biking, dog mushing, cross-country skiing).
- Take better advantage of the large volume of packaged and independent tourists passing through the area. Provide facilities for travelers that encourage them to slow down, take notice and spend money in the Y Community Council Area. Examples include roadside turnoffs and viewing areas (interpretive information, views of Denali), a new pedestrian-oriented town center featuring locally produced products, camping and picnic areas. These suggestions should only be established when the certainty of providing adequate services to maintain them can also be established. This is to prevent a situation where unmanageable costs are created and results in undesired and costly impacts on the community.
- Use targeted promotions, and careful sharing of information to steer visitors towards recreation areas (e.g. trails) that residents see as appropriate; and away from areas that are intended primarily for local use.

*Writer and peach farmer Mas Masamoto coined the term “micro-brewed tourism” to capture the idea there are two kinds of tourism: mass market (like mass market, low cost beers) and small volume/high value tourism. The latter category, like micro-brewed beers, emphasizes sale of small quantities of high value products – products that tell stories about places and create significant economic benefits with little disruption of local life. Tourism if well-managed can bring significant local benefits, including opportunities for businesses directly serving tourists, added spending at service businesses like stores or gas stations, and a way to effectively subsidize services and businesses that local spending alone can’t support.*

## **GOAL 3 Designate and maintain outdoor recreation resources (open space, trails, lakes, etc.) for future generations.**

### **HOW? – MEANS TO REACH GOAL**

To ensure the value and quality of these natural resources, the Y Community recognizes the need to effectively maintain its open space, trails, and lake areas that are open to public access and use. In order to do this, the community hopes to target those visitors that will respect and enjoy the natural resources of the area and clearly post appropriate locations for parking, trailhead access, lake access, and designated camping areas. In addition, the Y Community encourages businesses that benefit from these visitor attractions to contribute to the maintenance of these recreational resources.

This topic is largely addressed in the recreation/open space chapter. A few additional recommendations are presented below:

#### **A. Appropriate Markets – Target appropriate markets of visitors to attract to the area.**

Examples of high value/low impact visitors include non-motorized trail users, small group tours and in-state residents looking for weekend getaways.

#### **B. Recreation Signage – Post standardized signs at trail heads, lakes, fishing areas, and other recreation spots to identify and promote these resources to residents and visitors.**

See Land Use and Recreation chapters.

#### **C. Volunteer Day – Encourage businesses community-wide that benefit from visitor attractions to volunteer one day a year (or more?) to clean-up, repair, and improve the recreational resources throughout the community.**

Encouraging businesses in the area to take ownership of and responsibility for the community's natural recreational resources is one way to minimize vandalism, polluting, and misuse of the local resources. Ideally, this should be a responsibility of all users of the trails, lakes, and other outdoor recreational resources in the community. Clean-up, repair and improvement of the recreational resources should also be a priority of community service activities.

## **GOAL 4 Strengthen and promote the identity of the YCC Area and its inclusive neighborhoods, facilities, and services.**

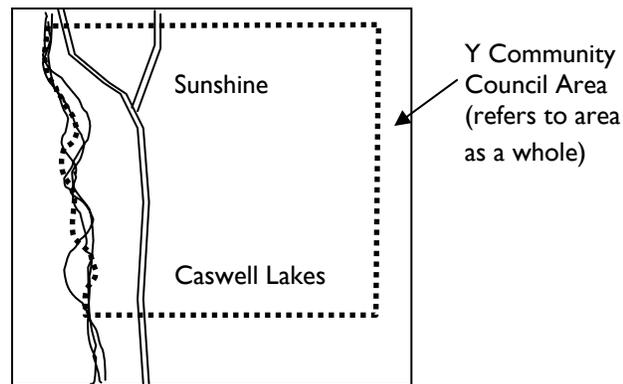
### **BACKGROUND AND COMMUNITY VALUES**

The Y Community Council Area lacks a clear identity. Unlike Willow, Talkeetna and Trapper Creek, the other small unincorporated communities in the area, the YCC Area is quite dispersed, doesn't have a clear center, and doesn't have a commonly accepted name. The community recognizes this issue and has discussed options to give the area a clearer sense of identity, both for residents and visitors.

### **HOW? – MEANS TO REACH GOAL**

**A. Goals for Identity – Establish community-wide agreed upon goals for promoting the identity of the YCC Area, its inclusive neighborhoods, facilities, and services. Identify neighborhood and area-wide names that the community can use to identify itself to residents and the outside world.**

Part of the reason the YCC Area does not have a clear identity is that it is not a single community. Land within the Y Community Council Area takes in at least two separate neighborhoods - the Sunshine Y/Montana Creek area, and Caswell Creek – each with a unique set of characteristics (and characters). At the same time, these neighborhoods are part of a single community council area. In the future, to address this problem, the area will refer to itself as shown in the accompanying map. This same terminology is used throughout this plan.

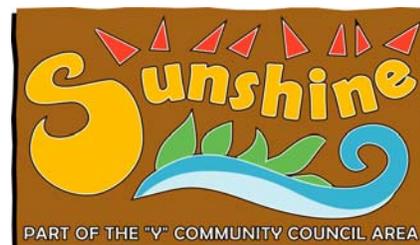


**Figure 10: Y Community Council Area**

In addition to resolving naming issues the community needs to articulate and agree on the image it wants to project to the world. Based on work to date as part of this community comprehensive plan process, key ideas include: self reliance; access to the natural world, entrepreneurship, proximity to Denali and the Alaska Range.

**B. Community Signage – Develop a set of consistent, attractive community signs that help with way finding and create a stronger sense of community identity.**

Signs should be developed that identify the two primary neighborhoods within the YCC Area, and also in a more modest way, identify that these neighborhoods are part of the larger community council. A preliminary, illustrative example is shown at right. Such signs could be posted along the Parks Highway at the entry to each of the two primary YCC Areas neighborhoods. See Figures 12 and 13 for illustrative examples of signs.



**Figure 11: Sample Sign**

**Figure 12: Illustrative Examples of Signs**



**C. Events - Identify statewide or regional niche markets that fit with community values. Promote those events to these target markets.**

Examples include farmers market, arts and crafts markets, music festival, athletic events such as a bike or ski race, and fishing derbies.

**D. Facilities – Utilize and enhance facilities in the YCC Area to promote the identity of the community to visitors.**

Establish facilities and associated interpretive information that gives a stronger sense of the YCC Area's natural setting, history, current life and recreation opportunities. One particularly compelling example would be to establish several roadside scenic pull offs, where visitors could get a view out over the northern Matanuska-Susitna Borough up to the Alaska Range and Denali. Informative signs should be posted at trails, trail heads, and view points that educate visitors about the area.

**E. Promotion – Identify strategic target markets that the community wants to attract. Utilize the Community Resources Directory to market the businesses, services, and attractions of the community to regional and statewide Conventions & Visitors Bureaus (MSB CVB, Anchorage CVB, and the State).**

## MAJOR GOALS & STRATEGIES

### Leadership & Communication

*“We need a mechanism that provides residents with more local control; more influence over public services; influence over decisions made by the borough, state, and federal government; and influence over decisions by large landowners.”*

#### Overview

In terms of leadership and communication, the creation of the YCC Area Comprehensive Plan is one key step towards gaining greater local control and communicating the values, goals, and guidelines of the Y Community Council Area to parties throughout the state. At the 2003 Gathering, participants identified preparation of a comprehensive plan as the community’s top priority. Preparing a plan was seen as the best way to understand community priorities, focus community action, and have more control over decisions made at the borough, state and regional levels.

The community also wants to strengthen their internal communication network, as well as their communication with parties outside the community. The community wants to improve its ability to achieve the goals and strategies of the comprehensive plan and associated community-supported priority projects.

The community seeks better communication, leadership, and more control over the future of the community. At the same time, many people are also very cautious about the risks of creating an over-intrusive government.

#### Leadership & Communication Goals

- 1. Strengthen the community’s control over issues affecting the future of the Y Community Council Area.**
- 2. Improve the communication network within the community as well as between the community and outside entities.**
- 3. Narrow priorities to increase odds of success of community projects.**

## **GOAL I Strengthen the community's control over issues affecting the future of the Y Community Council area.**

### **HOW? – MEANS TO REACH GOAL**

#### **A. Community Council – Strengthen the capacity of the Y Community Council to better serve the YCC Area.**

Currently the community relies upon the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and the Borough-established Y Community Council Area and service districts for local governance. This current approach along with several alternatives are outlined and evaluated on the chart at the end of this chapter. During the November 2004 Draft Plan Review Community Workshop, residents agreed that the Y Community Council should establish itself as a non-profit 501(c)(3) status. This is a high priority for the Y Community Council and will likely be initiated in the near-term.

Based on community input and discussions to date, the preferred governance alternative is to strengthen the existing community council. This would include establishing an official office location for the Council (perhaps in the proposed community center), creating a 501(c)(3) status to allow the community council to receive grant funding, and funding for a part-time staff position. One good short-term option for this latter objective would be to work with the VISTA Program which could train and hire a local resident. Other alternatives for funding a staff person and covering office costs include holding local fundraising events; soliciting annual donations from residents and businesses that benefit from better local governance; and collecting lease payments from office and business spaces located in the planned community center building. The Council should also work with the Borough to identify a parcel of land for locating the proposed facility, and to establish funding for maintaining the facility.

#### **B. Youth Leadership – Encourage opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills and actively participate in community-building activities throughout the community.**

Youth are a valuable resource for strengthening the future capacity for local control in the community. There is a snowball effect when a community values and encourages youth to take-on leadership roles in the community. Oftentimes this is an untapped community resource, with capacity to carry out projects which adults don't have time to do. Options to encourage youth involvement include establishing a seat for young people on the Community Council, recruiting youth to participate in community projects, offering youth leadership camps, and encouraging student government involvement in community planning activities.

#### **C. The Comprehensive Plan – Completion of the Comprehensive Plan.**

A comprehensive plan gives the community a voice in the development decisions made by state, regional, and federal agencies, as well as large landowners and businesses that affect the YCC Area. It is an important step towards gaining greater local control and increasing funding opportunities available to the community. The community is currently preparing its comprehensive plan with the support and assistance of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

## **GOAL 2 Improve the communication network within the community as well as between the community and outside entities.**

### **HOW? – MEANS TO REACH GOAL**

**A. One Voice – Maintain and strengthen the authority of the Community Council to represent the community. Avoid situations where multiple groups claim representation of community consensus, or where outside parties can choose to dismiss community-wide opinions.**

Completing a comprehensive plan is an important step towards establishing a common voice representing the community's interests. In addition, the Community Council's ability to accurately represent community-wide interests is also supported through this plan. Ultimately, the plan helps to limit the opportunities for misrepresenting community-wide agreed upon values, goals, strategies, and policies.

**B. Community Communication Network – Identify opportunities for improving the existing communication network between residents, businesses, neighborhoods, and the community council.**

Explore the existing communication network in the community to determine which combination of approaches most effectively improve communication community-wide. Promising options are listed below:

Word of mouth – talking to neighbors about what's going on in the community.

Bulletin boards – establish accessible locations (i.e., stores, the proposed community center, the proposed town site, etc.) where the community can get updates on meetings, plans, projects, etc.

Newspaper – work with the Talkeetna Good Times to establish a regular “Y Community News” section that would keep the community informed about upcoming meetings, special events, etc.

Website – create a community website (see Gustavus as an example). This could take form as a Borough-hosted website that involves youth in developing and maintaining the website. The community could partner with the National Parks Service to use a facility for youth to help with the webpage.

E-mail/list serve – establish a collection of email addresses that would receive regular updates on community issues (perhaps a regular electronic newsletter).

Newsletter – circulate a newsletter (monthly, quarterly?) providing a regular update on community events. In the near-term, a column in the existing seniors' newsletter is one potential option.

KTNA – utilize the local radio station to communicate community events, issues and interests.

**C. Regional Communication Network – Improve communication between the community council and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, other agencies and large landowners.**

Having a comprehensive plan in place is an excellent starting point to communicate community values, goals and policies to those outside the community. Distribute the YCC Area Comprehensive Plan to those outside the community, and ensure the community's voice is heard at Borough

Planning Commission and Assembly meetings by having a community representative attend those meetings. It is also important that the Council stay in communication with other community councils via email.

**D. Multi-Agency Satellite Office – Establish a multi-agency satellite office in the YCC Area.**

If feasible, this will improve the ability of the YCC Area to effectively communicate with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, National Parks Service, Veterans Affairs, unemployment services, legislators and other agencies. A multi-agency office can also help expand the capacity of the YCC Area to address a wide range of issues. In return, a multi-agency office will improve the agencies' ability to keep the YCC Area informed and improve the community's ability to learn about opportunities available to them. One good way to achieve this objective would be to include space for a multi-agency satellite office in the proposed community center building.

**E. Participation on Borough Boards and Commissions**

Y Community members, particularly members who are on the Community Council and/or regularly participate in Community Council issues, should seek out positions on Borough boards and commissions. Becoming part of the Borough Planning Commission and the Parks, Recreation and Trails Advisory Board would be very helpful as the community works on land use and recreation issues.

## **GOAL 3** Narrow priorities to increase odds of success of community projects.

### **HOW? – MEANS TO REACH GOAL**

#### **A. Choose Your Battles – Identify the top priorities (e.g. 3-5) that the community wants and needs.**

One of the main values of this comprehensive plan is that it provides a mechanism for setting priorities among competing projects. The Implementation Plan section of this plan outlines these priorities, focusing on projects that are strongly needed; that have a likelihood of success; and are realistic. Setting and achieving priorities can be one of the best ways for a community to gain citizen support, and build capacity to take on more challenging projects.

#### **B. Monitor Funding Sources – Encourage the Council to monitor potential funding sources for the priority projects.**

Once a community identifies the goals or projects they want to pursue, it can take several years to realize them in entirety. Steps towards achieving project goals include: identifying various funding opportunities; applying for funding; planning for projects, acquiring land and securing local financial capacity. These are just a few of the steps that must be taken before projects are even initiated. Therefore, needs identified today may not be met for several years or even a decade later. Key recurring funding options include:

Matanuska-Susitna Borough Annual Bed Tax Allocation (Fall)

Matanuska-Susitna Borough Annual Capital Improvement Program (Fall)

State of Alaska Department of Transportation Statewide Transportation Plan (“the STIP”)

## **GOVERNANCE – ALTERNATIVE SCENARIOS**

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### **Governance Alternatives**

Currently, the Y Community Council Area is an unincorporated community in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (an organized borough). Planning, platting, and land use authority resides within the Borough Assembly. There are 25 communities with established community councils in the Borough. Of the communities in the Borough, three are incorporated cities (Houston - 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, Wasilla - 1<sup>st</sup> Class, and Palmer - home rule); the rest are unincorporated. The Borough Assembly has the land use planning and regulatory authority in the Y Community Council Area; and Borough staff, often working with consultants, typically prepare a community's comprehensive plan.

Once the YCC Area Comprehensive Plan is adopted by the Borough Assembly, it will gain legal authority under Title 29 of the Alaska Statutes. Once a comprehensive plan gains legal authority other organizations (both inside and outside the planning jurisdiction) have legal obligations to abide by the guidelines set forth in the comprehensive plan. Because comprehensive plans establish a long term vision for the community, the recommendations the plan presents are broad and general. So, while the authority established by the plan is real, and valuable in communities like the Y that struggle to control the behavior of powerful outside entities, that authority is broad in scope. Establishing authority over specific issues, such as the width of a setback, generally requires a separate action to implement the plan's general intent, such as a Special Use District.

Although the Borough Assembly is currently the governing body for the YCC Area, the Borough Assembly has the authority to delegate or “share back” the planning authority to first class, second class and home rule cities within the borough. The Borough cannot “share back” planning, platting, or land use authorities to unincorporated communities within the borough because an unincorporated community is not legally structured to retain and implement these authorities under State law.

The remainder of this section outlines options for expanding local control and communication for the Y Community Council Area. Table 16 describes increasing levels of local control. As was mentioned under Goal 1 of this chapter, the second option is preferred.

**Table 16: Levels of Local Control**

OPTION	BUDGET	BENEFITS & CONSTRAINTS
<p><b>Community Council</b> <b>(as it exists today)</b></p>	<p><b>Approx. annual budget</b> <b>Low</b> <b>&lt; \$500</b></p>	<p>Non-Governmental Organization; Flexible; Driven by Community Volunteers; Minimal Financial Requirements;</p> <p>No office location or staff position; requires very large commitment of capable volunteers for success. Limited budget; limited capacity; less local control than incorporated city; Borough Assembly retains authority over local area (e.g. to administer land use regulations)</p>
<p><b>Community Council with Staff and Office</b> <b>Non-Profit (“501(c)3 status”)</b></p>	<p><b>Moderate</b> <b>Approx. \$50,000</b></p>	<p>Flexible; Still requires community volunteers, but with staff support and an office Community Council could be much more ambitious.</p> <p>Moderate budget needed; requires strategies for raising funds (for office and staff resources); more resources = greater capacity. Less local control than incorporated city; still relies on Borough Assembly authority over local area</p>
<p><b>Incorporation</b></p>		<p>Governmental Organization; has authority to generate local revenues; greater local control; greater annual budget required; requires establishing property tax, sales tax, bed tax or other means of raising funds. For a small community like the Y area, many government responsibilities would likely remain with the Borough.</p>

Table 17 describes powers and obligations of various forms of incorporation available to communities in Alaska. The community has generally expressed serious doubts about the near term benefits of incorporation; this table is merely provided as a reference, and to illustrate the range of options available under incorporation.

**Table 17: Powers & Obligations of Alaskan Cities**

<b>Powers &amp; Obligations of Alaskan Cities</b>			
<b>Power/Obligation</b>	<b>Home Rule City</b>	<b>First Class City</b>	<b>Second Class City</b>
<b>Public Education</b>	In unorganized borough mandatory; not permitted in organized borough.	Same as home rule.	Same as home rule.
<b>Planning, Platting, Land Use Regulation</b>	In unorganized borough mandatory; may be permitted by organized borough.	Same as home rule, except power must be exercised in accordance with AS 29.40.	Optional but may be permitted as described for first class cities.
<b>Property Tax</b>	May tax up to 30 mills. Some home rule charters require voter approval of rates.	May tax up to 30 mills. By statute, voter approval not required, however local governments can be more restrictive.	May tax up to 20 mills. Voter approval required by statute.
<b>Sales Tax</b>	Rate of levy may be set by charter; voter approval may be set by charter.	No limit set by statute; however, voter approval required.	Same as for first class city.
<b>Structure of City Council / Mayor</b>	Determined by city charter or ordinance.	Framework set by state law.	Framework set by state law.
<b>Eminent Domain</b>	Permitted by statute.	Permitted by statute.	Permitted, but requires voter approval.
<b>Population for Incorporation</b>	400	400	25
<b>Sample Communities and Size of Population</b>	Kenai - 7,058 Valdez - 4,155 Seward - 4,030 Nenana - 435	Wasilla - 5,134 Homer - 4,155 Skagway - 813 Seldovia - 281	Kotzebue - 2,964 Delta Junction - 884 Whittier - 306 Bettles - 25

# IMPLEMENTATION

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## Implementing the Comprehensive Plan

The following pages present an implementation program for carrying out the recommendations of the Y Community Council Area Comprehensive Plan. This section provides both a summary of priority projects and a complete table showing all short-term and long-term actions identified by the community to achieve the goals of the comprehensive plan. Recognizing that the comprehensive plan is a long-term planning tool, the implementation plan is intended to be revised periodically to reflect successful completion of certain tasks and updates to the progress of other tasks.

## **SUMMARY OF HIGHEST PRIORITY PROJECTS**

YCC Area residents gathered in November 2004 for a two-day workshop where they gave input on the draft version of the YCC Area Comprehensive Plan. During this workshop, residents discussed and identify priorities for the implementing the plan, summarized below:

### **Land Use & Town Center**

- Prepare and adopt a Special Use District
- Establish “open space” subdivision policies

### **Recreation & Open Space**

- Retain Borough lands for recreation and open space
- Prepare a Trails Master Plan
- Prepare an Open Space and Recreation master plan
- Improve lake and river access

### **Circulation**

- Improve the capacity of existing roads (see chapter for specifics)
- Improve connectivity between existing roads (see chapter for specifics)
- Better enforce road and subdivision standards
- Do a Plan for Bypass, then reserve bypass route
- Identify the following as YCC Area priorities in the Parks Highway Plan
  - a. Expand existing roadside trail system
  - b. Plan and re-locate trailheads, view points, rest areas, and preserve quality of springs

### **Public Services & Facilities**

- Expand fire services and training
- Improve public water supply (including spigots at springs)
- Establish a community center
- Establish a library (perhaps in community center)
- Identify land parcel for future elementary school in the Caswell Lakes area
- Identify land parcel for cemetery

### **Economic Development**

- Organize a local Economic Development Forum
- Improve Community Identity, identify neighborhood and area-wide names

### **Leadership & Communication**

- Funding for Community Council office and staff person
- Establish a non-profit 501(c)(3)
- Complete the Comprehensive Plan

# IMPLEMENTATION

## Implementing the Comprehensive Plan

Project	Lead	Cost	Resources To Do the Work	Schedule			Committee Comments
				2007	2008	After 2008	
<b>LAND USE &amp; TOWN CENTER</b>							
<i>GOAL 1 – RURAL CHARACTER</i>							
<b>PRIORITY 1:</b> Prepare and adopt Special Use District	YCC	\$\$\$	MSB, Consultant	X			
<b>PRIORITY 2:</b> Establish “open space” subdivision policies	YCC	\$	MSB	X			
Set process and then consolidate small lots	MSB	\$	MSB, Land owners		X		
<i>GOAL 2 – CLUSTER COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT</i>							
Prepare and adopt Special Use District – see above							
Work with DOT&PF re: rules on signage, new driveways and frontage roads	YCC	--	MSB, DOT&PF, Business owners	X			
<i>GOAL 3 – PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED MIXED-USE TOWN CENTER</i>							
Prepare a detailed town center plan	YCC	\$\$	MSB, Consultant		X		
Maintain and improve public access – plan for bypass (see Circulation section)	YCC	\$\$	MSB, DOT&PF		X		
Improve town center area utilities	YCC	\$\$\$\$	MEA, MSB, etc.		X		
<i>GOAL 4 – LOCATION &amp; CHARACTER OF DEVELOPMENT</i>							
Prepare and adopt Special Use District – see above							

\$ = \$100s    \$\$ = \$1,000s    \$\$\$ = \$10,000s    \$\$\$\$ = \$100,000s    \$\$\$\$\$ = \$1,000,000s

Project	Lead	Capital Cost	Resources To Do the Work	Schedule			Committee Comments
				2007	2008	After 2008	
<b>RECREATION &amp; OPEN SPACE</b>							
<i>GOAL 1 – ACCESS TO NATURAL FEATURES &amp; OPEN SPACE</i>							
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Retain Borough lands for recreation and open space	YCC	--	MSB	x			
Create a recreation and open space plan	YCC	\$\$\$	MSB, Consultant		x		
<i>GOAL 2 – PROVIDE SERVICES TO DIVERSE USER GROUPS</i>							
Improve/build indoor recreation facility	YCC	\$\$\$- \$\$\$\$\$	MSB, Funders, community			x	School is option?
<i>GOAL 3 – CREATE A YCC AREA TRAILS SYSTEM</i>							
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Prepare a trails master plan: Map existing trails, document community trail needs, and needs for trail head improvements; review and adopt trails plan	YCC	\$\$	MSB, Consultant		x		
Construct and improve trails and trail heads							
- Secure public route for a north south trail	YCC	\$\$\$	MSB, community volunteers		x	x	
- East-west trails along stream corridors	YCC	\$\$\$	MSB, community volunteers		x	x	
<i>GOAL 4 – PROVIDE A COMMUNITY RECREATION SYSTEM</i>							
Create a recreation and open space plan - see above							
<i>GOAL 5 –RECREATION SYSTEM – Parks, Rec Facilities</i>							
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Improve lake, river access (for residents, visitors)	YCC	\$\$\$	MSB, State of AK, land owners		x		
Provide neighborhood parks	YCC	\$\$\$	MSB, community volunteers		x		

\$ = \$100s    \$\$ = \$1,000s    \$\$\$ = \$10,000s    \$\$\$\$ = \$100,000s    \$\$\$\$\$ = \$1,000,000s

Project <b>CIRCULATION</b> (roads, trails, trains, planes)	Lead	Capital Cost	Resources To Do the Work	Schedule			Committee Comments
				2007	2008	After 2008	
<i>GOAL 1 – IMPROVE EXISTING ROAD &amp; PLAN FOR FUTURE ROADS</i>							
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Improve the capacity of existing roads (see chapter for specific roads)	YCC	\$\$\$\$	MSB, DOT&PF		X	X	
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Improve connectivity between existing residential roads (see chapter for specific roads)	YCC	\$\$\$\$	MSB, DOT&PF		X	X	
<i>GOAL 2 – ROAD DEVELOPMENT &amp; SURFACING</i>	YCC						
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Strict enforcement of road and subdivision standards.	YCC	\$\$	MSB, Developers, landowners	X			
<i>GOAL 3 – EXPANSION OF PARKS HIGHWAY</i>	YCC						
Prepare and adopt Special Use District (see land use section)	YCC	\$\$	MSB, Consultant	X			
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Do bypass Plan, then reserve route for bypass	YCC	--	MSB, DOT&PF, landowners		X		
Construct bypass.	YCC	\$\$\$\$\$	DOT&PF			X	
<i>GOAL 4 – ACCESS TO TOWN CENTER</i>	YCC						
Develop a town center circulation plan	YCC, business	\$\$	MSB, DOT&PF, Consultant		X		
Develop a circulation plan for other commercial areas	YCC	\$\$	MSB, DOT&PF, Consultant		X		
<i>GOAL 5 – TRANSIT &amp; CARPOOL OPTIONS</i>							
Reserve sites for future carpool lots.	YCC	--	MSB, land owners		X		
Work with ARR to reserve option for rail-based transit.	YCC	--	ARR		X		

\$ = \$100s    \$\$ = \$1,000s

\$\$\$ = \$10,000s

\$\$\$\$ = \$100,000s

\$\$\$\$\$ = \$1,000,000s

Project <b>CIRCULATION (cont.) (roads, trails, trains, planes)</b>	Lead	Capital Cost	Resources To Do the Work	Schedule			Committee Comments
				2007	2008	After 2008	
<i>GOAL 6 – ROADSIDE TRAIL SYSTEM</i>							
Develop a plan to expand existing roadside trail system	YCC	\$\$	MSB, Consultant, landowners		x		
Plan and re-locate trailheads, view points, rest areas, and preserve quality of spring.	YCC	\$\$	MSB, Consultant, land owners		x		
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Identify the above two actions as priorities in the Parks Highway Plan.	YCC	--	MSB, DOT&PF	x			
<i>GOAL 7 – IMPROVE ROAD MAINTENANCE</i>							

\$ = \$100s    \$\$ = \$1,000s    \$\$\$ = \$10,000s    \$\$\$\$ = \$100,000s    \$\$\$\$\$ = \$1,000,000s

Project <b>PUBLIC SERVICES &amp; FACILITIES</b>	Lead	Capital Cost	Resources To Do the Work	Schedule			Committee Comments
				2007	2008	After 2008	
<i>GOAL 1 – IMPROVE COMMUNITY SERVICES</i>							
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Expand fire services and training	YCC	\$\$	MSB, land owners	x			
Retain public land for a future fire station	YCC	--	MSB, land owners	x			
Establish funding for new fire trucks	YCC	\$\$\$	Vol. Fire Dept.	x			
Establish a youth center	YCC	\$\$\$	MSB, land owners		x		
Establish a regional vocational-education program for youth	YCC	\$\$\$	B&G Club,		x		
Improve transportation services for youth	YCC	\$\$		x			
Improve childcare and pre-school services	YCC	\$\$		x			
Improve mental health service.	YCC	\$\$			x		
Improve local policing services	YCC	\$\$	MSB, residents	x			
Establish an adult education program	YCC	\$\$\$	UA		x		
Improve existing recreation facilities	YCC	\$\$			x		
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Improve public water supply (including spigots at springs)	YCC	\$\$		x			
Improve the management of uncontrolled dumping	YCC	\$\$	MSB,	x			
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Establish a community center	YCC	\$\$\$\$			x		
Establish a post office	YCC	\$\$\$\$	US Postal Service		x		
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Establish a library	YCC	\$\$\$\$			x		
\$ = \$100s      \$\$ = \$1,000s      \$\$\$ = \$10,000s      \$\$\$\$ = \$100,000s      \$\$\$\$\$ = \$1,000,000s							

Project	Lead	Capital Cost	Resources To Do the Work	Schedule			Committee Comments
				2007	2008	After 2008	
<b>PUBLIC SERVICES &amp; FACILITIES (cont.)</b>							
Expand electrical services.	YCC	\$\$\$\$			x		
Establish a road service plan.	YCC	\$\$	MSB, DOT&PF		x		
Improve transportation to schools.	YCC	\$\$		x			
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Identify land parcel for future elementary school in the Caswell Lakes area.	YCC	--	MSB, Y Comm Council	x			
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Identify land parcel for cemetery.	YCC	--	MSB, Y Comm Council	x			

\$ = \$100s

\$\$ = \$1,000s

\$\$\$ = \$10,000s

\$\$\$\$ = \$100,000s

\$\$\$\$\$ = \$1,000,000s

Project	Lead	Capital Cost	Resources To Do the Work	Schedule			Committee Comments
				2007	2008	After 2008	
<b><u>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</u></b>							
<i>GOAL 1 – RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT</i>							
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Organize a local Economic Development Forum.	YCC	--	Local businesses	x			
Create a community resources directory.	YCC	\$	Local businesses		x		
Create a business incubator.	YCC	\$\$\$			x		
Improve internet services.		--			x		
Develop land use policies.	YCC	\$\$		x			
<i>GOAL 2 – A DIVERSIFIED LOCAL ECONOMY</i>							
Hold events (fairs, races, farmers and crafts markets, etc.).	YCC	\$\$			x		
<i>GOAL 3 – MAINTAIN OUTDOOR RECREATION RESOURCES</i>							
Install appropriate signage and trail markers.	YCC	\$\$			x		
Establish a “Volunteer Day”.	YCC	--			x		
<i>GOAL 4 – IDENTITY OF THE YCC AREA</i>							
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Identify neighborhood and area-wide names.	YCC	--		x			
Construct community signs.	YCC	\$\$			x		

\$ = \$100s

\$\$ = \$1,000s

\$\$\$ = \$10,000s

\$\$\$\$ = \$100,000s

\$\$\$\$\$ = \$1,000,000s

Project	Lead	Capital Cost	Resources To Do the Work	Schedule			Committee Comments
				2007	2008	After 2008	
<b>LEADERSHIP &amp; COMMUNICATION</b>							
<i>GOAL 1 – LOCAL CONTROL</i>							
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Funding for Community Council office and staff person.	YCC	\$\$\$			x		
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Establish a non-profit 501(c)(3) status.	YCC	\$		x			
<b>PRIORITY:</b> Complete the Comprehensive Plan.	YCC	\$\$\$	MSB, Consultants,	x			
<i>GOAL 2 – COMMUNICATION NETWORK</i>							
Improve the community's communication network (i.e., newsletter, posting information, website, etc.).	YCC	\$	Residents, businesses, volunteers, Talkeetna Times, KTNA, etc.	x			
Establish a multi-agency satellite office.	YCC	\$\$\$	MSB, State & federal sources, Veterans Affairs, etc.		x		
<i>GOAL 3 – NARROW PRIORITIES</i>							

\$ = \$100s

\$\$ = \$1,000s

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# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVISIONS PROCESS

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## Process for Revising the Comprehensive Plan

A comprehensive plan is intended to be a long-range planning document, guiding growth and development over 20 years and longer. It is a “living document” that helps to guide the long-range goals and strategies of the YCC Area. Recognizing that changes occur within the term of 20 years, a comprehensive plan needs to be open to change in two ways. First there is need for a process to make amendments to specific plan goals and policies. This can be done through a process beginning with the community council, providing opportunities for public participation and input, then requiring review by the borough planning commission and an ordinance approving the plan adopted by the assembly.

The second category of changes is the need for a regular review, typically done every five years. The YCC Area Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed after five years by the Y Community Council to determine which actions have been accomplished, and which priority actions should be focused on during the following years. Over time, this review of the comprehensive plan will help to document the accomplishments made, and the new priorities that surface.

Although not required, one excellent way of documenting a community’s accomplishments is to produce a summary of those accomplishments after five years. The Native Village of Eyak (outside Cordova) provides an excellent example of how to document your community’s accomplishments. This approach improves future funding opportunities by documenting past successes. This can be done at any time by the community council in the form of a resolution or summary document, and does not necessarily require further review or approval by the planning commission or assembly. The reviews can then be used as a starting point for future plan updates. However, any substantial changes to goals and policies in the plan need to go through the complete process.

After 20 years, and the completion of many of the goals and strategies of the comprehensive plan, the Y Community Council will want to reflect upon the accomplishments of the preceding 20 years and, again, plan for the next 20 years by taking on a public participation process to gain community-wide input on the next YCC Area Comprehensive Plan. Upon completion of the next 20 year Comprehensive Plan, assembly action will again be required to legally adopt the updated plan into the borough code.

# Y Community Council Area Comprehensive Plan

## What Does Our Future Look Like?

The last round of Comp Plan Public Workshops starts soon. Your input is vital, and will be used to finalize policies and priorities for Land Use, Transportation, Economic Development, Recreation & Trails, and other subjects. Plan for your future - Plan to attend!

The YCC Area encompasses the Parks Hwy. from Caswell Creek to the Big Su crossing, and includes the Spur Road up to Mile 5.

Phase Two  
DRAFT PLAN REVIEW  
COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5**  
**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6**

**Susitna Valley High School**  
**Mile 98.5, Parks Highway**

Friday 5-9pm • **POTLUCK**  
Saturday 9am-1pm • **DONUTS+SNACKS**  
Please plan to attend both days.

Child care by appointment. Call 733-1080.  
Donated by Sunshine Station Child Care Center & YMCA.

**Questions?** Check with Planning Team Co-Chairs,  
Herman Thompson or Tom Kluberton  
(733-2626) (733-1457)

An invitation from the YCC Planning Team, Matanuska-Susitna Borough and Agnew::Beck Consulting

## APPENDIX B: Community Comment Form

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### PLEASE COMMENT!

If you are unable to attend the Y Community Workshop, or have more thoughts to put on paper after the Workshop is over, we'd like to hear what you have to say. Please write your comments below concerning this draft YCC Area Comp Plan and return to us by December 3rd, 2004.

You can tear out, fold and seal this piece of paper and mail it to us at:

Agnew::Beck Consulting ATTN: Y COMP PLAN COMMENTS  
441 West 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 202  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

**Name:**

**Phone:**

**Address:**

We can also accept your faxed comments at 907-222-5426 or send your e-mailed ones to [ellen@agnewbeck.com](mailto:ellen@agnewbeck.com). Please make your subject line "Y COMP PLAN COMMENTS." Please call us with questions at 907-222-5424. We look forward to hearing from you!

### LAND USE & TOWN CENTER

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### RECREATION, PARKS & TRAILS

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### CIRCULATION

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### ECONOMY

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### ENVIRONMENT

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### COMMUNITY SERVICES & FACILITIES

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The following narrative was copied from the Web Site of the:  
Alaska State Emergency Response Commission  
P.O. Box 5750, Fort Richardson, AK 99505-5750  
Phone: (907) 428-7000 Fax: (907) 428-7009  
dhs&em\_emergency\_mgmt@ak-prepared.com

## **ALASKA STATE CITIZEN CORPS COUNCIL**

*The mission of Citizen Corps is to harness the power of every individual through education, training, and volunteer service to make communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues, and disasters of all kinds.*

With many of Alaska's communities being isolated, techniques and skills learned through Citizen Corps programs may have greater and more frequent application in Alaska than in other states.

The State Citizen Corps Council is a subcommittee of the-all-hazards State Emergency Response Commission (SERC). The SERC Finance sub-committee decides how to allocate available grant funding for the establishment and operation of local Citizen Corps Councils, based on recommendations from the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

The State Citizen Corps Council chairperson, Beatrice Adler, sits on the National Disability & Emergency Preparedness Citizen Corps Working Group. Bea is convinced "that emergency preparedness education and CERT training in particular, can make the difference between a disabled individual being automatically consigned to being a victim versus a survivor, or even a hero". She is involved with many state-wide outreach activities and anticipates adding more local councils in the up coming year.

### **Community Highlights**

The Municipality of Anchorage launched the Emergency Watch program in March 2006. The Emergency Watch Program is a neighbor-led community education initiative designed to prepare neighborhoods for the reality that city services will be overextended for up to seven days after a terrorist event or natural disaster. Citizens who volunteer to be a neighborhood leader are asked to attend a two-hour orientation at the Emergency Operations Center, hold two short neighborhood planning meetings and participate in one annual exercise. All of these meetings include information about personal disaster preparation, developing a neighborhood emergency plan and practicing the neighborhood plan. Currently, we have trained over 100 neighborhood leaders and have established two neighborhood programs since the March 2006 launch of the program.

Citizens Police Academy, Neighborhood Watch, Medical Reserve Corps, and Fire Corps

programs are also offered in Anchorage.

See: <http://www.muni.org/oem/EmergencyWatch.cfm>

The Kenai Peninsula Borough Citizen Corps Council has partnered with the Spruce Bark Beetle Mitigation Program to present Wildfire Protection Plan programs in Peninsula communities. The Borough is approximately the same size as Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire combined. CERT training is offered as well. The Kenai Citizen Council has located disaster caches in various numerous communities which have hosted, or plan to host CERT training. Each disaster cache contains a small inventory of emergency supplies, which are available for use by CERT volunteers and emergency services personnel.

More information can be found on their website <http://www.kpvolunteers.org/>.

The Shungnak - Kobuk Citizen Corps Councils have combined and continue working to develop partnerships in the Upper Kobuk Region. The Shungnak Citizens Corps initiated its first outreach program to the Village of Ambler. This outreach program will potentially interface with all villages in a 100 mile radius in order to expand the Citizen Corps Program. The Shungnak Citizen Corps Council has expressed the goal of eventually bringing Citizen Corps to every native village in Alaska.

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Council has found that by partnering with other established programs they are able to reach a wider audience and with more potential volunteers. The Mat-Su Council has been successful in using their newly formed Volunteer Community Organizations Assisting in Disaster (VOAD) group to spread the word about CERT. The purpose of VOAD is to organize and train members of volunteer organizations and congregations who wish to step forward as a community resource in time of disaster. The chair is pastor of a Willow church and accordingly, thirty volunteers completed CERT training in Willow, with an additional 20 scheduled to begin training in September. Willow has formed a CERT team and demonstrated their skills at their local Health Fair in April.

The Mat-Su Council teamed with Alaska State Troopers and presented the Neighborhood Watch program to 135 residents of a subdivision that had been victimized frequently. The ensuing publicity promoted other neighborhoods to organize and the Neighborhood Watch Program continues to grow with subdivisions signing on rapidly.

The Mat-Su Council collaborates with the Borough's Firewise program to integrate Firewise, CERT, Neighborhood Watch and Citizens Corps programs in presentations given to homeowner associations or other interested groups.

CERT training is now a regular part of the Junior ROTC curriculum at Colony High and will grow to include other schools. Future CERT classes are scheduled for Wasilla, Big Lake, Willow and Chickaloon. CERT Train-The-Trainer has been offered twice in Mat-Su, with attendees coming from all over Alaska.

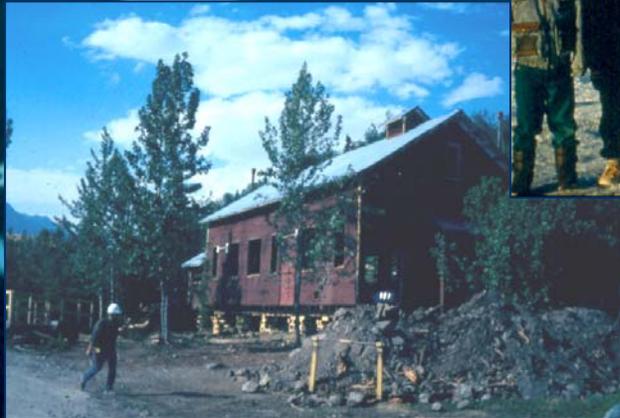
The Cordova Citizen Corps Council is composed of the Volunteer Fire Department Disaster Management Team members. Their goal is to have all citizens participate in making their community safe and better prepared. They are working with the City to update Cordova's Emergency Operations Plans, and promoting increased public

**awareness through educational programs. The Cordova Council supports CERT and maintains a CERT cache for members to use in the event of a disaster or emergency response.**

**The Copper Valley Citizen Corps promotes the CERT program in the local High School curriculum, and prepares and distributes outreach material through their local media. One of the council's goals is to introduce the Neighborhood Emergency Service Team (NEST) to the Copper Valley. Their new annual "Disasters Awareness Days" event, a collaboration between private, state and federal agencies, is fast becoming a popular with students and their families. The Copper Valley area encompasses over 20,000 square miles, with twenty-two communities.**

**Updated November 2006**

# COMMUNITY FACILITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT WORKBOOK



## OVERVIEW

This workbook is for use by community residents and organizations planning to develop a new community facility. The goal of this process is to plan a facility that is *right-sized* to accommodate community uses while being sustainable to operate. This process emphasizes combining multiple uses within one facility and leveraging multiple funding sources for the design and construction phases of development.

By completing this workbook, you are completing the major elements of a competitive funding proposal or business plan for your facility. This is the first step towards creating a facility that is a blessing to your community without placing an added burden on already stretched resources.

Before getting started, discuss with your planning committee the following questions:

### **Questions to be answered before developing a Community Facility:**

- Overall fit with community priorities – is this facility a top priority?
- Planning – who will serve on a committee to lead the planning effort?
- Coordination– how will the facility be used?
- Build new vs. renovate existing facilities?
- Building costs – how much, what sources of funding?
- Sustainability – how much will it cost to operate, how to pay?
- Feasibility – is facility really needed, really affordable?
- Leadership - who will operate the building, pay the bills?

# PLANNING PROCESS

## GETTING STARTED

1. Form Planning Committee



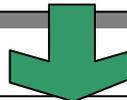
## Project Scoping

2. Set goals for facility
3. Define context: what related community projects are in progress?
4. Prepare facility concept sketch (& construction budget)
5. Prepare operations costs concept sketch
- \*6. Preliminary conclusions: judge feasibility & refine goals



## Site/Existing Building Selection

8. Review options – build new or renovate?
9. Evaluate specific sites/buildings
10. If needed: establish site control, conduct environmental assessment



## Project Development – Business Plan

11. Refine building design
12. Refine capital budget
13. Refine operations budget
14. Clarify Governance – who will own/operate facility?
- \*\* 15. Final feasibility assessment – is project sustainable?
16. Develop fundraising strategy
17. Develop & submit funding applications



## PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION (Arch & Eng)

- ❑ Final building design
- ❑ Final operations & capital budgets
- ❑ Construction planning
- ❑ Construction



- c. Resources: list community plans or reports completed or in progress that will assist the community facility planning effort. Also, list strategic plans completed or in process for community organizations.

<i>Name of Plan</i>	<i>Who has a copy?</i>

- d. Compile other documents necessary to complete conceptual planning process:

- Aerial photo of village
- Budget information from potential tenants to assess ability to pay for lease and utilities
- Square footage of current office and multi-purpose spaces
- Rough estimate of construction cost (\$ per square foot) for other recently built facilities in your village
- Rough estimate of operating cost (\$ per square foot per year) for other comparable facilities in your village

**2. Set Goals & Vision**

a. List three **goals** for the new community facility that describe how the facility will improve service delivery or community life.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

b. Describe, in just a few words, your **vision** for your new facility. What will the atmosphere be like? What will it look like? What words describe it? Jot down phrases and words – don't worry about completing a statement at this stage.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Remember to circulate goals & vision to others not present for feedback.*

**3. Context –Community Priorities**

a. List other projects in progress in the community

<i>PROJECT</i>	<i>STATUS</i>	RELATIONSHIP TO THIS PROJECT (if any)

- b. Using existing community & regional plans and/or a simplified community planning process, identify community's **five highest priority issues** (for example, economic development, housing, education, cultural programs, etc.).

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_

- c. Is improving this facility a priority for your village at this time?
- d. Later: Develop a resolution for village organizations to sign in support of improving family resources in your village.

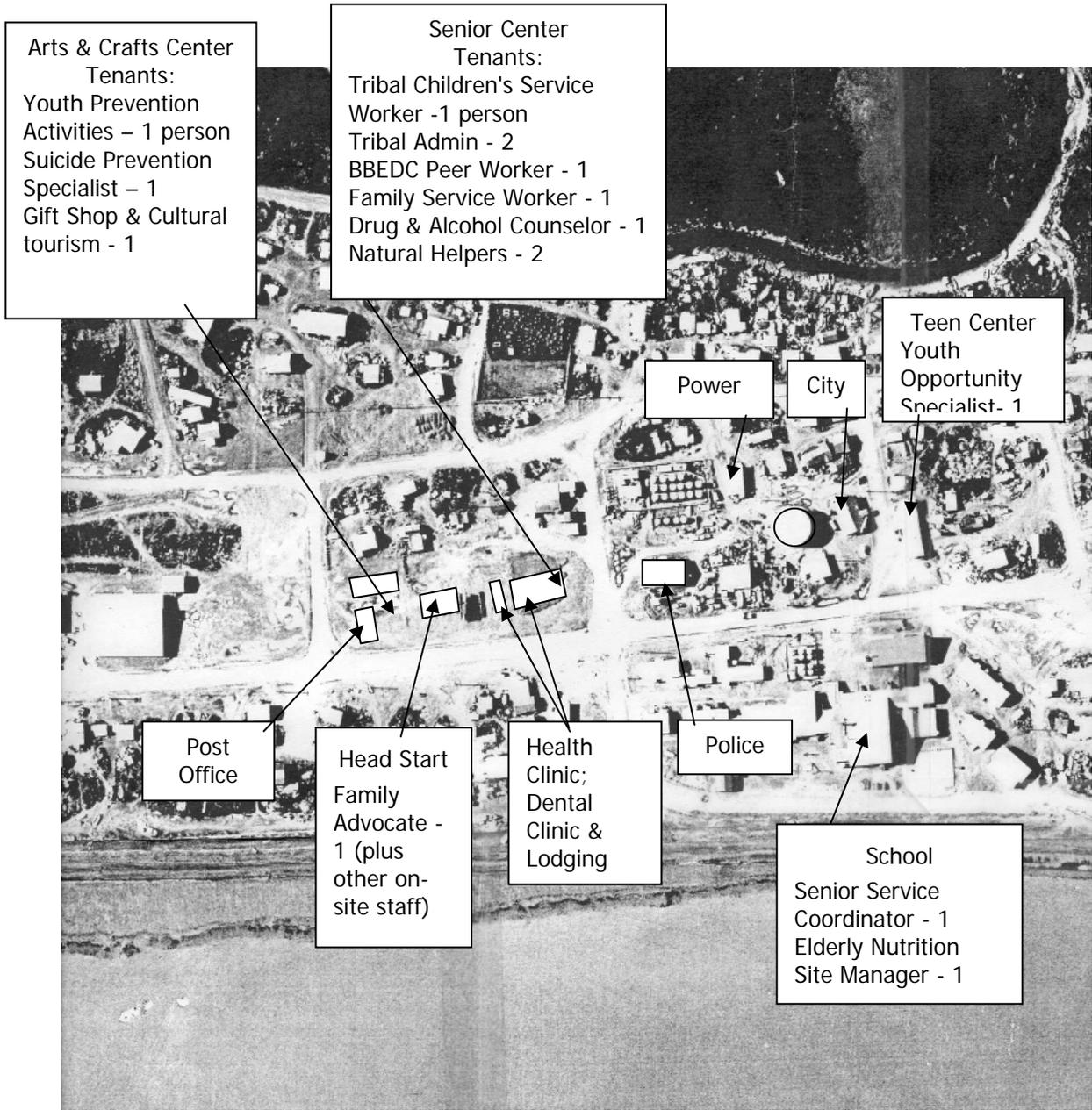
**4. Inventory current services that will be housed in the new facility**

**[IF YOU ARE PLANNING FOR ONLY ONE USER (TENANT), SKIP QUESTION 4 AND CONTINUE TO QUESTION 5]**

- a. Use table on page 8 to list existing services and office locations of potential tenants. *Remember to survey those not present to assess their needs.*
- b. Use an aerial photo of your village to map existing community facilities and current locations of potential tenants. *See example on page 9.*

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER -- PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT															
SPACE NEEDS BY POTENTIAL TENANT															
	CURRENT LOCATION					SPACE NEEDS					SPACE QUALITIES			SHARED SERVICE NEEDS	
** List potential tenants **List current office locations **Place an X in the appropriate boxes for each potential tenant															
<b>Potential Tenants</b>															
For example, TCSW, Healthy Families, child care providers, etc.															
1															
2															
3															
4															
5															
6															
7															
8															
9															
10															

# EXAMPLE



## Inventory existing location of services to be provided in new facility

Map:

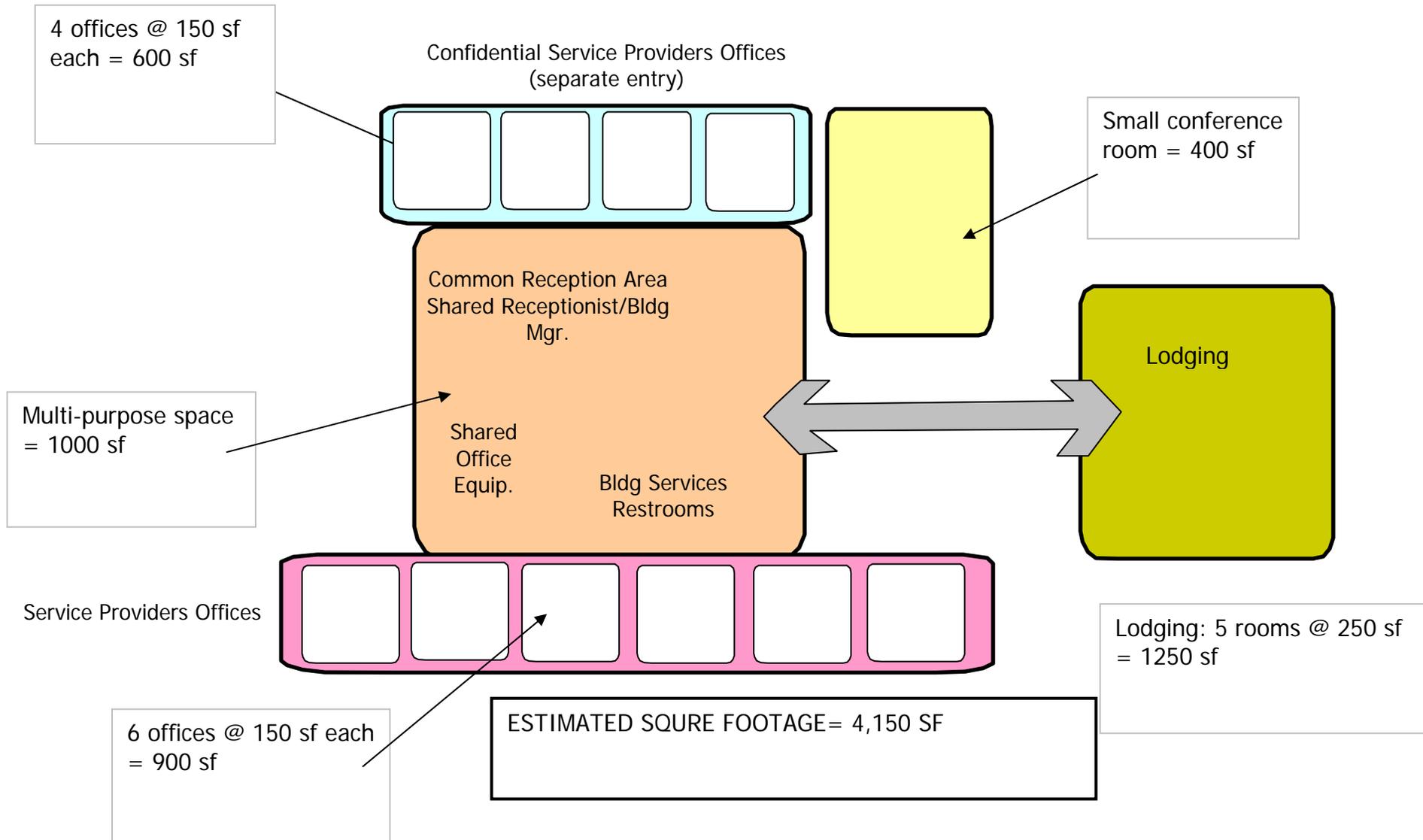
- Potential tenants & number of workers
- Location of current office space
- Other important community facilities



- b. \*\* Roughly estimate construction cost by totaling square footage and multiplying by the estimated dollar per square foot construction costs for your village.
- c. Estimate local match required for construction by multiplying cost estimate by 20%.
- d. Brainstorm with group sources for local match – land, other grants, city or tribal funds, etc.
- e. Sketch preliminary concept design for facility see diagram on page 12 for example. Use information recorded above to sketch tenant requirements

# Community Facility CONCEPT DESIGN

# EXAMPLE



## 5. OPERATIONS COSTS CONCEPT SKETCH

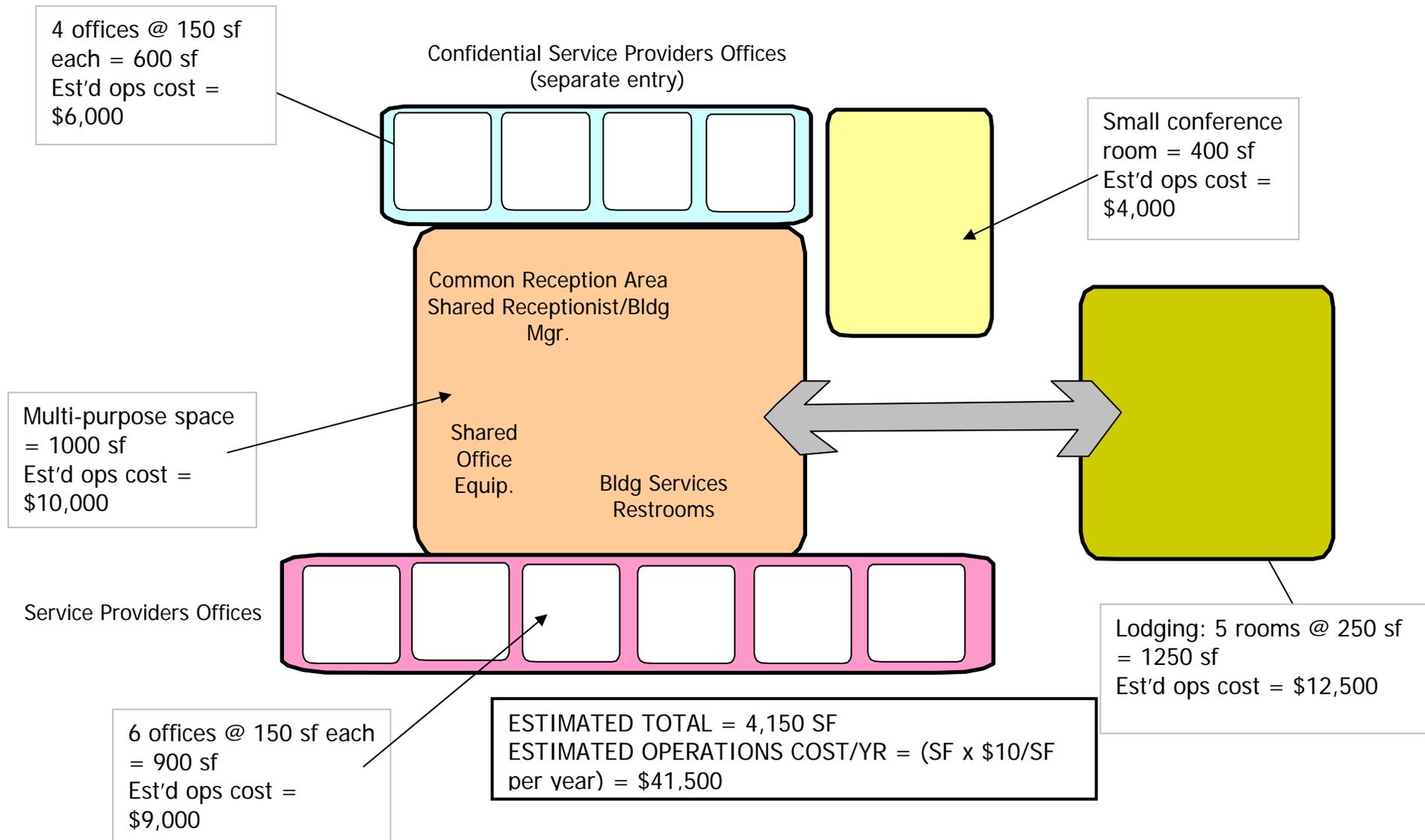
- a. If your facility will have multiple tenants each making lease payments towards the operating costs of the facility, list each tenant here and identify the operations costs and expected revenues for the square footage they will occupy.
- b. If your facility has only one tenant, enter the total square footage for the facility to estimate operations costs OR if you have multiple funding streams supporting different aspects of your program, identify these here and how much each will contribute to the operations costs of the facility.

User/ Tenant	Estimated Sq. Feet	Estimated Operations cost/year (SF x \$_____/yr)	Lease/ utilities revenues per year	Funding Source	Surplus or (deficit)	Notes
TOTAL square footage:						
TOTAL operations cost/year: **		\$				
TOTAL revenues per year:			\$			
TOTAL surplus or deficit to be covered by other sources:					\$	

b. Enter operations costs into concept design sketch. See example on page 14.

# EXAMPLE

## Community Facility CONCEPT DESIGN PLUS OPERATIONS COSTS



## **7. Preliminary Conclusions: Judge Feasibility & Refine Goals**

As a group:

- a. Review estimated total square footage for facility, estimated operations costs, expected revenues, and estimated funding surplus or deficit.
- b. Brainstorm other sources of funding that will cover deficits (if any).
- c. Adjust concept sketch as needed by reducing size and/or number of office spaces, reducing size of shared spaces, and considering other tenants that could help defray costs (for example, post office, washeteria, clinic, etc.)
- d. Remember to consider what will become of existing facilities if your services move to a new location – will existing facilities be able to operate? Adjust your program to ensure that other facilities do not suffer as a result of creating the new community facility.
- e. Evaluate what scope of project is feasible for your village and evaluate if this facility will meet your needs.
- f. Once a feasible scope has been agreed upon by the group move on to next step: site evaluation & selection.

## SITE EVALUATION & SELECTION

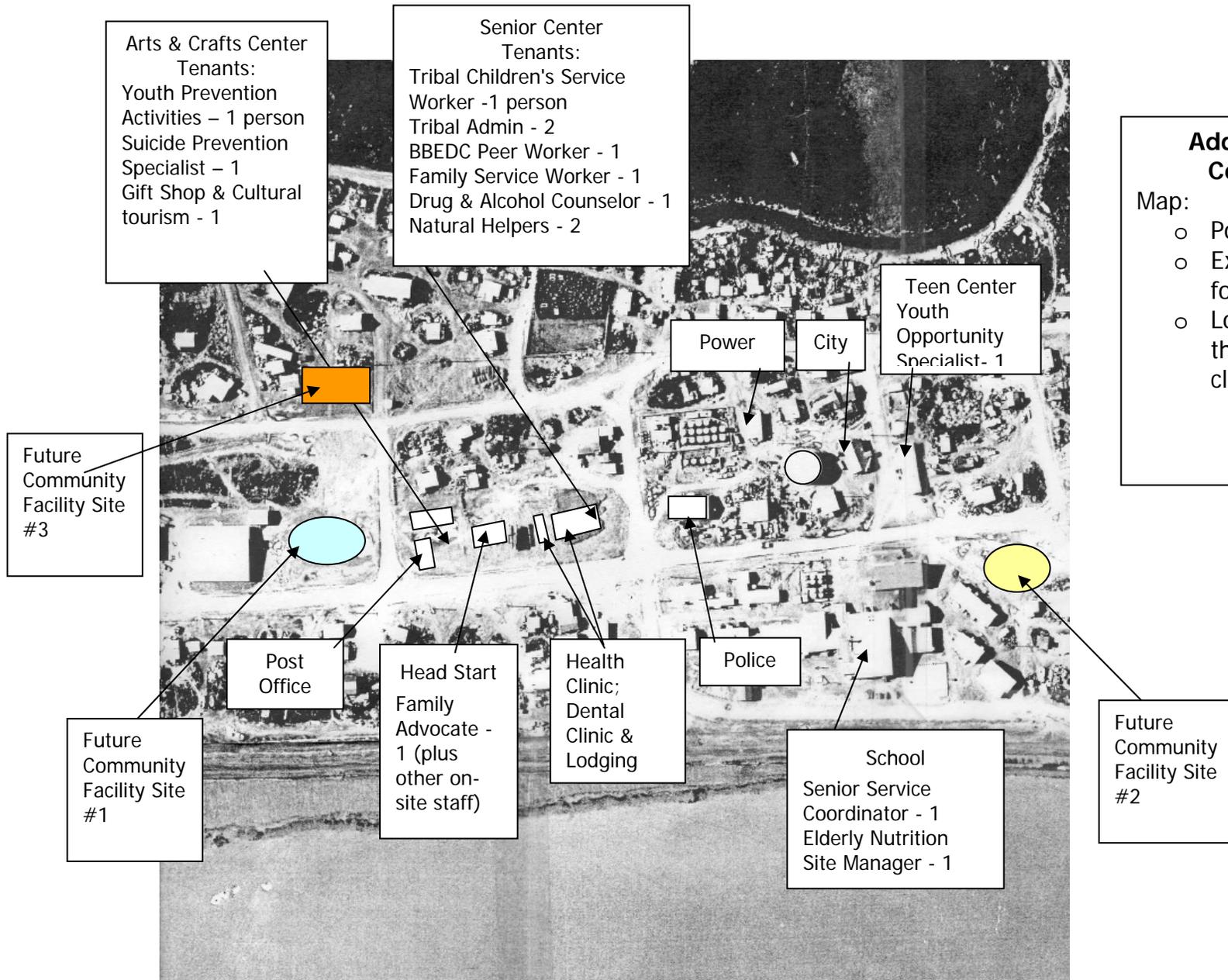
### 8. Review Options: Build or Renovate

- a. List below the five most important criteria for evaluating potential sites for the new community facility (for example, central location, site control, close to utility hook-ups etc.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

- b. Use aerial photo to map potential sites for facility. Include both existing buildings, and possible sites. *See example on page 17.*

# EXAMPLE



**Add Potential Sites for Community Facility**

Map:

- Potential sites
- Existing buildings available for renovation
- Location of other facilities that will share services or clients with new facility

- c. Use table below to evaluate potential sites for construction and/or buildings for renovation. *See following example.*

	<b>Site #1 – Across from Post Office</b>	<b>Site #2 – by old school</b>	<b>Site #3 – renovate old warehouse</b>
<b>Close to clients</b>	Best	Good	Good
<b>Cost to construct/ renovate</b>	Min \$300/ sf	Min \$300/ sf	\$150/ sf
<b>Site size compared to desired SF</b>	OK	Small	OK
<b>Cost to operate</b>	\$41,500	\$41,500	\$41,500
<b>Site development</b>	Some	Some	None
<b>Electricity</b>	Y	Y	No
<b>Water/Sewer</b>	Y	Y	No
<b>Timing</b>	3-4 yrs	3-4 yrs	1-2 yrs
<b>Chance of successful fundraising</b>	Community match 10-20% of total cost	Community match 10-20% of total cost	Community match already secured by land & building
<b>Site Control issues</b>	Need conveyance from village corp.	Purchase from private owner.	None -- In city control already.

**Your Turn** – List site evaluation criteria from page 16 in left column, and potential sites identified on page 17 along top row.

	Site #1	Site #2	Site #3
Criteria 1:			
Criteria 2:			
Criteria 3:			
Criteria 4:			
Criteria 5:			

**9. Evaluate specific sites/buildings and make final selection**

As a group:

- a. Based on the criteria established by the group, and the comparison of possible sites and existing facilities, discuss which site will best meet the needs of the community facility.
- b. Meet with village and city councils and village corporation board members, as needed, to finalize site selection and begin to establish site control (if needed).

- c. Draft and pass resolution and/or Memoranda of Agreement regarding conveyance or lease of site for the new community facility.

## **10. Establish site control, conduct environmental assessment (If needed)**

### *PROJECT DEVELOPMENT – BUSINESS PLAN*

---

Once the planning committee and governing bodies have agreed on a concept design, facility program, and potential site for facility AND have determined the preliminary feasibility of the project, the committee should work with a qualified architectural and/or engineering firm to produce preliminary drawings and cost estimates for the facility.

## **11. Refine building design**

## **12. Refine capital budget**

## **13. Refine operations budget**

## **14. Clarify Governance – who will own/operate facility?**

## **\*\* 15. Final feasibility assessment – is project sustainable?**

Once these preliminary documents are produced the planning committee and governing bodies should make a final judgment on the feasibility and sustainability of the project.

## **16. Develop fundraising strategy**

Designated members of the planning committee should select funding sources and evaluate funding criteria to ensure all required information is compiled. Application deadlines and schedule of funding cycles need to be coordinated with design and construction schedule.

## **17. Develop & submit funding applications**

### *PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION*

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*Each community will contract with qualified architectural, engineering and construction management firms to complete final design and construction documents and complete construction.*

# United States Fire Administration

## Fiscal Year 2003 Recipients

[2004](#) | [2003](#) | [2002](#) |

[2001](#)

### Alaska

#### FY 2003 Award Recipients through 10/1/04

Fire Dept. Name	State	City	Category	Federal Share	Award Announced
Alaska Village Initiative	AK	Anchorage	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$710,370	12/19/2003
Aniak Vol. Fire Dept.	AK	Aniak	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$86,805	8/8/2003
Atka Vol. Fire Dept.	AK	Atka	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$32,400	12/19/2003
Bayside Fire Station	AK	Kodiak	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$142,380	2/13/2004
Bear Creek Fire Service Area	AK	Seward	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$58,277	8/22/2003
Bethel Vol. Fire Dept.	AK	Bethel	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$149,144	1/9/2004
Big Lake Volunteer Fire Department	AK	Big Lake	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$47,893	7/25/2003
Butte	AK	Palmer	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$80,236	10/31/2003
Central Mat-Su Fire Dept.	AK	Wasilla	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$388,062	10/24/2003
Chena-Goldstream Fire & Rescue	AK	Fairbanks	Firefighting Vehicle	\$161,100	11/28/2003
Chitina Volunteer Fire Department	AK	Chitina	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$13,500	7/25/2003
Chugiak Vol. Fire & Rescue	AK	Chugiak	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$109,350	1/16/2004
City of False Pass Fire Department	AK	False Pass	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$5,400	9/5/2003
City of Palmer Fire Dept.	AK	Palmer	Fire Prevention	\$62,100	1/9/2004
City of Unalakleet Fire Department	AK	Unalakleet	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$17,298	1/23/2004
Cordova Vol. Fire Dept.	AK	Cordova	Firefighting Vehicle	\$177,300	9/12/2003

Ester Volunteer Fire Department	AK	Fairbanks	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$26,442	7/25/2003
Fairbanks Fire Dept.	AK	Fairbanks	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$323,062	12/12/2003
Funny River Emergency Services Inc. (FRES)	AK	Soldotna	Firefighting Vehicle	\$225,000	8/22/2003
Gustavus Emergency Response	AK	Gustavus	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$21,886	8/22/2003
Haines Volunteer Fire Department	AK	Haines	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$139,932	7/18/2003
Hope/Sunrise Volunteer Fire Department	AK	Hope	Firefighting Vehicle	\$45,450	9/5/2003
Houston Vol. Fire Dept.	AK	Houston	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$26,582	8/29/2003
Kenai Fire Dept.	AK	Kenai	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$45,000	12/12/2003
Kenny Lake Vol. Fire Dept.	AK	Copper Center	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$83,430	1/9/2004
King Cove Volunteer Fire Department	AK	King Cove	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$31,905	10/31/2003
Klehini Valley Fire Dept.	AK	Haines	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$41,400	7/3/2003
McKinley Village Fire Station	AK	Denali Park	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$50,085	8/22/2003
Naukati Vol. Fire/EMS Dept	AK	Naukati	Emergency Medical Services	\$13,616	12/19/2003
North Pole Fire Dept.	AK	North Pole	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$153,328	11/28/2003
North Star Vol. Fire Dept.	AK	North Pole	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$100,035	7/3/2003
North Tongass Vol. Fire Dept.	AK	Ketchikan	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$335,643	10/10/2003
Port Alexander Volunteer Fire Dept	AK	Port Alexander	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$12,969	7/25/2003
Rural Deltana Volunteer Fire Dept.	AK	Delta Junction	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$185,899	12/5/2003
Saint George Island VFD	AK	Saint George Island	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$40,354	11/14/2003
Sapa Vol. Fire Dept.	AK	Copper Center	Firefighting Vehicle	\$85,500	7/3/2003
Sitka Volunteer Fire Department	AK	Sitka	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$85,536	7/25/2003
South Tongass Vol. Fire Dept.	AK	Ketchikan	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$145,941	10/24/2003
St. Paul DPS Fire Services Division	AK	St. Paul Island	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$103,843	11/7/2003
Talkeetna Fire Service Area	AK	Wasilla	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$51,272	10/31/2003
Tok Volunteer Fire Department	AK	Tok	Firefighting Vehicle	\$225,000	7/25/2003

Tyonek Vol. Fire Dept.	AK	Tyonek	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$9,000	11/14/2003
Valdez Fire Dept.	AK	Valdez	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$182,697	9/26/2003
Willow Fire Dept.	AK	Willow	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$88,901	2/6/2004
Wrangell Vol. Fire Dept.	AK	Wrangell	Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety	\$121,086	10/3/2003
<b>Total</b>				\$5,242,409	

*Last Updated: November 23, 2004*

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An official web site of the [Department of Homeland Security](#) and the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#)

U.S. Fire Administration, 16825 S. Seton Ave., Emmitsburg, MD 21727

Voice: (301) 447-1000 Fax: (301) 447-1346 Admissions Fax: (301) 447-1441

## **APPENDIX F: Resolution No. 04-01**

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MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH  
MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON TASK FORCE ON POLICE POWERS  
RESOLUTION NO. 04-01

A RESOLUTION OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH MAYOR'S BLUE RIBBON  
TASK FORCE ON POLICE POWERS RECOMMENDING THE BOROUGH'S ADOPTION OF  
AREAWIDE POLICE POWERS

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WHEREAS, the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Police Powers has completed a preliminary study of crime-related issues within the Matanuska-Susitna Borough; and

WHEREAS, study methodology included the review of a Core Area Survey on Crime and Crime Prevention, the consideration of public comments and concerns; the compilation and graphing of borough-wide crime statistics; the analysis of local, state, and national crime studies and reports; and discussions with local law enforcement, incarceration, and judicial experts; and

WHEREAS, a substantial majority of survey respondents indicated support for borough-sponsored public safety services; and

WHEREAS, public testimony at task force meetings indicated perceived increases in criminal activity and a need for additional police protection; and

WHEREAS, the analysis of five years of Matanuska-Susitna Borough crime statistics indicated an increase in reported cases of assault, burglary, larceny, vehicle theft, homicide, and cases involving domestic violence; and

WHEREAS, studies reviewed by the task force indicated that sexual assault and domestic violence rates per capita in Alaska were significantly higher than the national average; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska State Troopers reported that Trooper staffing levels have not increased in proportion to population growth, and that the Troopers are behind schedule on approximately 900 cases in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough; and

WHEREAS, major local problems reported in discussions with law enforcement, judicial, and incarceration professionals included upward trends in domestic violence, alcohol and drug related crimes, and the severity of juvenile crime; and

WHEREAS, concerns about the lack of immediate consequences for juvenile offenders, under-reporting by victims of domestic violence, an overloaded judicial system, overcrowding in prisons, and reductions in state funding for intervention and treatment programs were also addressed; and

WHEREAS, the same professionals conveyed that there is a need for additional police, quicker response times, additional probation officers, and increased resources dedicated to programs emphasizing prevention, early intervention and treatment; and

WHEREAS, through a survey and discussions, the task force examined the potential costs and benefits of several options including implementing a borough police force, contracting with the Alaska State Troopers, and contracting or combining forces with the Cities of Palmer and Wasilla.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Mayor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Police Powers hereby recommends that the borough adopts police powers and contracts with the state troopers for the provision of additional police services;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force recommends that the borough supports ancillary measures such as wellness courts and COPS in Schools; establishes a centralized neighborhood watch office; and collaborates with community groups to develop and fund programs that emphasize prevention, education, intervention, and treatment.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Mayor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Police Powers this 16th day of June, 2004.

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Diane LoRusso, Co-Chair

ATTEST:

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Cynthia Payne, Co-Chair

## **APPENDIX G: Code of the West**

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*The Code of the West* was first chronicled by the famous western writer, Zane Grey. The men and women who came to this part of the country during the westward expansion of the United States were bound by an unwritten code of conduct. The values of integrity and self reliance guided their decisions, actions and interactions. In keeping with that spirit, we offer this information to help the citizens of the Y Community Council Area who wish to follow in the footsteps of those rugged individualists by living outside city limits.

### **Introduction**

It is important for you to know that life in the country is different from life in the city. Borough governments are not able to provide the same level of service that city governments provide. To that end, we are providing you with the following information to help you make an educated and informed decision to purchase rural land.

### **Access**

The fact that you can drive to your property does not necessarily guarantee that you, your guests and emergency service vehicles can achieve that same level of access at all times. Please consider:

1.1 - Emergency response times (law enforcement, fire suppression, medical care, etc.) cannot be guaranteed. Under some extreme conditions, you may find that emergency response is extremely slow and expensive.

1.2 - There can be problems with the legal aspects of access, especially if you gain access across property belonging to others. It is wise to obtain legal advice and understand the easements that may be necessary when these types of questions arise.

1.3 - You can experience problems with the maintenance and cost of maintenance of your road. The Mat-Su Borough maintains 100's of miles of roads, and many rural properties receive minimum maintenance. Some borough roads are not maintained by the Borough - no grading or snow plowing. Some public roads that are not maintained by anyone! Make sure you know what type of maintenance to expect and who will provide that maintenance.

1.4 - Extreme weather conditions can destroy roads. It is wise to determine whether or not your road was properly engineered and constructed.

1.5 - Many large construction vehicles cannot navigate small, narrow roads. If you plan to build, it is prudent to check out construction access.

1.6 - In extreme weather, even maintained roads can become impassable. You may need a four wheel drive vehicle with chains for all four wheels to travel during those episodes, which could last for several days.

1.7 - Natural disasters, especially floods, can destroy roads. MSB repairs and maintains Borough roads; however, many subdivision roads are the responsibility of the landowners who use those

roads. A low volume creek bed can become a torrent and wash out roads, bridges, and culverts. Residents served by private roads and/or bridges may be responsible to help with costs for repairs and/or reconstruction after floods.

1.8 - Unpaved roads generate dust. Dust is still a fact of life for most rural residents.

1.9 - If your road is unpaved, it is unlikely that the Borough will pave it in the foreseeable future. Check with the Borough when any statement is made by the seller of any property that indicates any unpaved roads will be paved!

1.10 - Roads are not always smooth and are often slippery when they are wet. You will experience an increase in vehicle maintenance costs when you regularly travel on rural roads.

1.11 - Mail delivery is not available to all areas of the Borough. Ask the postmaster to describe the system for your area.

1.12 - Newspaper delivery is similarly not always available to rural areas. Check with the newspaper of your choice before assuming you can get delivery.

1.13 - Standard parcel and overnight package delivery can be a problem for those who live in the country. Confirm with the service providers as to your status.

1.14 - It may be more expensive and time consuming to build a rural residence due to higher costs for materials and higher costs to reach your site.

1.15 – Because access to your property may be blocked by weather and other factors for extended periods, you should always have on hand adequate food, medicine, and other supplies and be prepared for road closures or other access blockages.

## **Utility Services**

Water, sewer, electric, telephone and other services may be unavailable or may not operate at urban standards. Repairs can often take much longer than in towns and cities. Please review your options from the non-exhaustive list below.

2.1 - Sewer service is generally not available, so you will need to use an approved septic system or other treatment process. The type of soil you have available for a leach field will be very important in determining the cost and function of your system. Have the system checked by a reliable sanitation firm and check the applicable rules established by the State Department of Environmental Conservation.

2.2 You will most likely not have access to a supply of treated domestic water, and will have to locate an alternative supply. The most common method is use of a well. Permits for wells are granted by the state engineer and the cost for drilling and pumping can be considerable. The quality and quantity of well water can vary considerably from location to location and from season to season. The water level in a well may change over time, necessitating drilling a deeper or replacement well. It is strongly advised that you research this issue very carefully.

2.3 - Electric service is not available to every area of the borough. It is important to determine the proximity of electrical power. It can be very expensive to extend power lines to remote areas.

2.4 - It may be necessary to cross property owned by others in order to extend electric service to your property in the most cost efficient manner. It is important to make sure that the proper easements are in place to allow lines to be built to your property.

2.5 - If you are purchasing land with the plan to build at a future date, there is a possibility that electric lines (and other utilities) may not be large enough to accommodate you if others connect during the time you wait to build.

2.6 - The cost of electric service is usually divided into a fee to hook into the system and then a monthly charge for energy consumed. It is important to know both costs before making a decision to purchase a specific piece of property.

2.7 - Power outages can occur in outlying areas with more frequency than in more developed areas. A loss of electric power can also interrupt your supply of water from a well. You may also lose food in freezers or refrigerators and power outages can cause problems with computers as well. It is important to be able to survive for up to a week in severe cold with no utilities if you live in the country.

2.8 - Trash removal can be much more expensive in a rural area than in a city. In some cases, the closest place to dump trash may be miles from your home. It is illegal to create your own trash dump, even on your own land. It is good to know the cost for trash removal as you make the decision to move into the country. In some cases, your only option may be to haul your trash to the landfill yourself. Recycling is more difficult because pick-up is not available in most rural areas.

## **The Property**

There are many issues that can affect your property. It is important to research these items before purchasing land.

3.1 - Not all lots are buildable. The MSB Assessor has identified many parcels that are separate for the purpose of taxation that are not legal lots in the sense of having sufficient size and soil conditions to allow building. Check carefully to know that a piece of land can be built on.

3.2 - Easements may require you to allow construction of roads, power lines, water lines, sewer lines, etc. across your land. There may be easements that are not of public record. Check these issues carefully.

3.3 - Most property owners do not own the mineral rights under their property. Owners of mineral rights have the ability to change the surface characteristics in order to extract their minerals. It is very important to know what minerals may be located under the land and who owns them. Much of the rural land in the Borough can be used for mining. Be aware that adjacent mining uses can expand and cause negative impacts.

3.4 - You may be provided with a plat of your property, but unless the land has been surveyed and pins placed by a licensed surveyor, you cannot assume that the plat is accurate.

3.5 - Fences that separate properties are often misaligned with the property lines. A survey of the land is the only way to confirm the location of your property lines.

3.6 - Many subdivisions have covenants that limit the use of the property. It is important to obtain a copy of the covenants (or confirm that there are none) and make sure that you can live with those rules. Also, a lack of covenants can cause problems between neighbors.

3.7 - Homeowners associations (HOAs) have been established in some areas to take care of common elements, roads, open space, etc. A dysfunctional homeowners association or poor covenants can cause problems for you and even involve you in expensive litigation.

3.8 - Dues are often a requirement for those areas with a HOA. The by-laws of the HOA will tell you how the organization operates and how the dues are set.

3.9 - The surrounding properties will probably not remain as they are indefinitely. You can check with the Borough Planning Department to find out how the properties are zoned and to see what future developments may be in the planning stages. The view from your property may change.

## **Mother Nature**

Residents of the Borough usually experience more problems when the elements and earth turn unfriendly. Here are some thoughts for you to consider.

4.1 - The physical characteristics of your property can be positive and negative. Trees are a wonderful environmental amenity, but can also involve your home in a forest fire. Building at the top of a forested draw should be considered as dangerous as building in a flood prone area. Defensible perimeters are very helpful in protecting buildings from forest fire and inversely can protect the forest from igniting if your house catches on fire. If you start a forest fire, you are responsible for paying for the cost of extinguishing that fire. For further information, you can contact the Borough Emergency Services Department.

4.2 - Steep slopes can slide in unusually wet weather. Large rocks can also roll down steep slopes and present a great danger to people and property.

4.3 - North facing slopes rarely see direct sunlight in the winter. There is a possibility that snow will accumulate and not melt until very late in spring.

4.4 - The topography of the land can tell you where the water will go in the case of heavy precipitation.

4.5 - Spring run-off or heavy rains can cause a very small creek to become a major river. The Borough does not provide equipment or people to protect private property from flooding.

4.8 - Nature can provide you with some wonderful neighbors. Most are positive additions to the environment. However, even "harmless" animals like moose can cross the road unexpectedly and cause traffic accidents. Rural development encroaches on the traditional habitat of moose, bears, mosquitoes and other animals that can be annoying or dangerous and you need to know how to deal with them. In general, it is best to enjoy wildlife from a distance and know that if you do not handle your pets and trash properly, it could cause problems for you and the wildlife. The State Department of Fish and Game and the National Park Service are two good resources for information. They have many free publications to help educate you about living in the wild.

## **Agriculture**

Owning rural land means knowing how to care for it. There are a few things you need to know:

5.1 - Farmers often work around the clock, especially during planting and harvest time. Dairy operators sometimes milk without stopping and hay is often swathed or baled at night. It is possible that adjoining agriculture uses can disturb your peace and quiet.

5.2 - Land preparation and other operations can cause dust, especially during windy and dry weather.

5.3 - Farmers occasionally burn their ditches to keep them clean of debris, weeds and other obstructions. This burning creates smoke that you may find objectionable.

5.4 - Chemicals (mainly fertilizers and herbicides) are often used in growing crops. You may be sensitive to these substances and many people actually have severe allergic reactions. Many of these chemicals are applied by airplanes that fly early in the morning.

5.5 - Animals and their manure can cause objectionable odors. What else can we say?

5.6 - Agriculture is an important to residents of the area. If you choose to live among the farms and ranches of our rural countryside, do not expect Borough government to intervene in the normal day-to-day operations of your agricultural neighbors.

## **In Conclusion**

Even though you pay property taxes to the Borough, the amount of tax collected does not cover the cost of the services provided to rural residents. In general, those living in the cities and commercial and industrial properties subsidize the lifestyle of those who live in the country by making up the shortfall between the cost of services and the revenues received from rural dwellers.

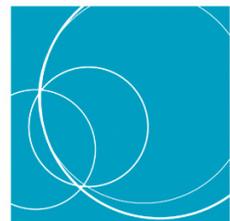
This information is by no means exhaustive. There are other issues that you may encounter that we have overlooked and we encourage you to be vigilant in your duties to explore and examine those things that could cause your move to be less than you expect.

We have offered these comments in the sincere hope that it can help you enjoy your decision to reside in the country. It is not our intent to dissuade you, only inform you.

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resources for community



## HOW CAN YOU HELP PROTECT WATER QUALITY?

### Voluntary Best Management Practices For Development around Waterbodies

Best Management Practice	Rationale
<p>Maintain the natural shoreline or riparian habitat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserve a minimum 75 foot wide buffer of continuous, undisturbed native vegetation along at least 50% of the parcel's shoreline or stream bank.</li> <li>• Along remaining 50% of shoreline, limit vegetation removal to what is necessary to accommodate paths, docks, or other limited development.</li> </ul>	<p>Protects water quality by reducing nutrient loading in lakes and minimizing temperature changes to stream environments.</p> <p>Provides flood control and reduces erosion and sedimentation.</p> <p>Protects fish and wildlife habitat by providing cover, nest sites and spawning areas.</p>
<p>Minimize impervious surfaces on shoreline lots.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit to maximum of 25% of lot area.</li> <li>• Minimize as much as possible within 75 feet of the water's edge.</li> </ul>	<p>Impervious surfaces such as pavement, roof tops, and compacted soil allow runoff to enter waterbodies more readily.</p> <p>Runoff in residential or commercial areas may contain phosphorus and other nutrients that lead to oxygen deficits and algal blooms.</p>
<p>Avoid adding sand beaches or adding fill material to lakeshore, stream banks or wetland areas.</p>	<p>Sand or fill reduces water clarity, is harmful to aquatic life and may contain phosphorus that enriches waterbodies.</p>
<p>Adhere to the state of Alaska's 100 foot waterbody separation for septic systems and outhouses, and keep septic systems in good working order.</p>	<p>Bacterial contamination from poorly maintained or leaking septic systems or outhouses is a human health concern.</p> <p>Nutrients from poorly functioning septic systems or outhouses are waterbody pollutants.</p>
<p>Use landscaping practices that will reduce degradation of waterbodies, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test soils to see if fertilizers are needed and use sparingly.</li> <li>• Design a smaller lawn to reduce fertilizer use.</li> <li>• Use native species that grow well without fertilizer.</li> <li>• Avoid fertilizer use completely within 50 feet of the water's edge.</li> </ul>	<p>Lawns are often over-fertilized, which leads to harmful levels of nutrients in the water.</p> <p>Lawns are not as effective as natural vegetation for pollution filtration.</p> <p>Lawns do not provide protective cover for fish and wildlife populations that are part of the waterbody system.</p>
<p>Maintain at least a 75 foot distance from the water's edge for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional permanent or accessory buildings.</li> <li>• Driveways, roads and other impervious surfaces.</li> <li>• Livestock or dog quarters or yards.</li> <li>• Manure or compost piles.</li> <li>• Long-term vehicle or equipment storage.</li> </ul> <p>Exceptions may include boathouses, floatplane hangers, marinas, piers and docks that need to be closer than 75 feet to serve their purposes.</p>	<p>Protects human health and water quality by reducing contamination from animal waste, compost, fuels, sediment and other substances that pollute waterbodies.</p>

Mat-Su Borough Ordinance 05-023 established voluntary measures that property owners can use to protect the quality of our lakes, streams and wetlands. For more information, contact the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Department of Planning and Land Use at 745-9851.

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