

A STUDY OF
DOWNTOWN EAGLE RIVER,
ALASKA

by

NEIL RAY KLOPFENSTEIN
B.S., Iowa State University, Ames

Submitted to the Department of
Urban Studies and Planning
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Degree of

MASTER OF CITY PLANNING

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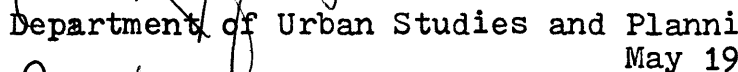
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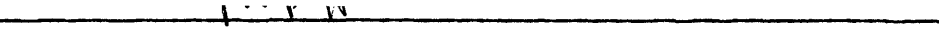
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May 1982

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis is a planning study of the downtown area of Eagle River, Alaska. The focus and direction of the study were determined after a series of public workshops with Eagle River area residents. The study analyzes and proposes recommendations to deal with four major issues confronting downtown Eagle River. The four issues concern transportation, community facilities, parks and open space, and downtown development.

The thesis is divided into three parts. In the first part of the thesis, the Downtown Eagle River Study is presented. The major issues affecting Eagle River are analyzed and recommendations are proposed. The second part of the thesis is a short report to the citizens of Eagle River. The short report summarizes the recommendations in the Study and explains how citizens can use the Study. In the third part of the thesis, some reflections on my Alaskan thesis experience are presented.

Thesis Supervisor: Philip B. Herr

Title: Associate Professor of Urban Studies
and Planning

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to my parents and family.

Thanks to Phil Herr and Linda Snyder.

Thanks to my friends.

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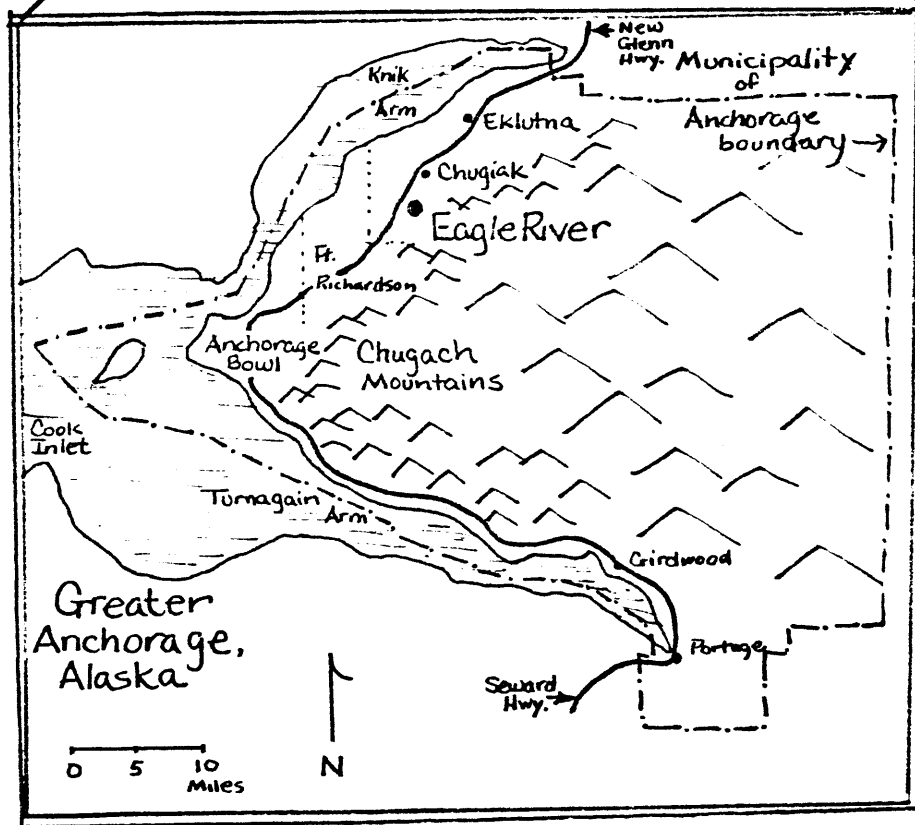
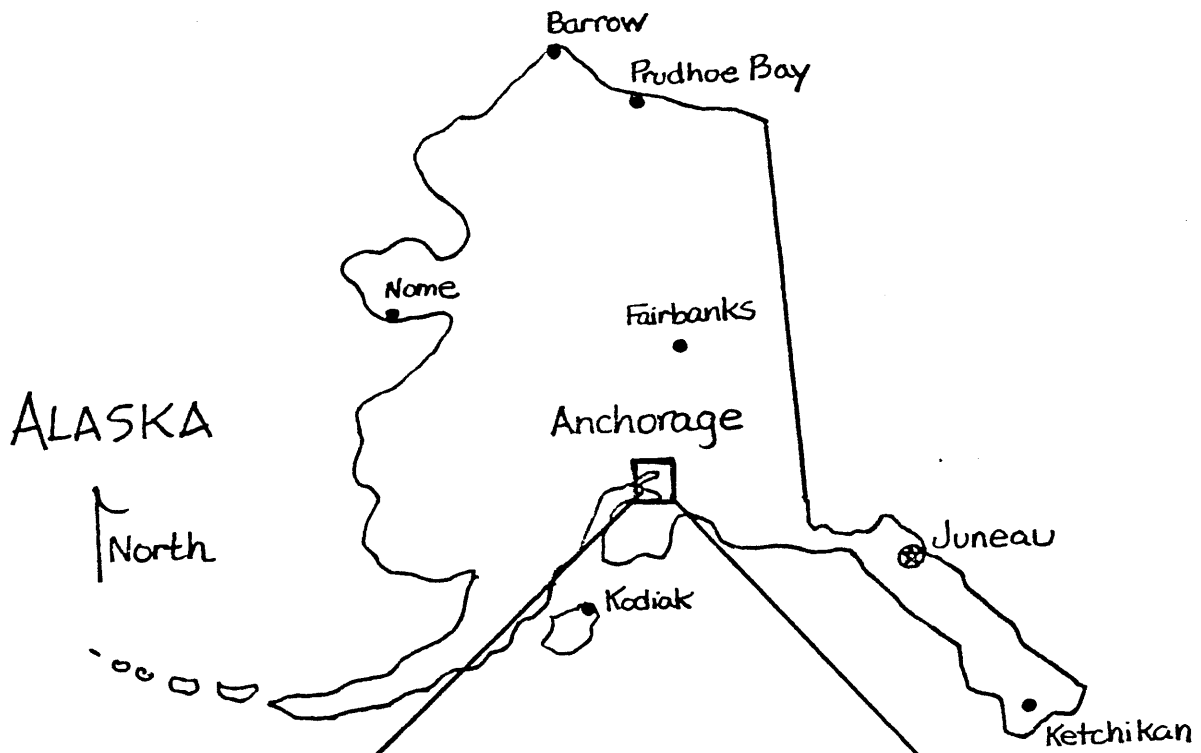
PREFACE

PREFACE

Eagle River is a rapidly developing suburban community of Anchorage, Alaska. The community of about six thousand people is located fifteen miles northeast of downtown Anchorage and is separated from the developed Anchorage Bowl by the Fort Richardson Military Reservation. Eagle River and the neighboring community of Chugiak have experienced rapid growth in recent years. Because of the greater abundance and lower cost of developable land, the Eagle River-Chugiak area has become the fastest growing area in Alaska. In 1982, over one thousand housing units are expected to be built in the region.

The Eagle River-Chugiak region is under the governmental jurisdiction of the Municipality of Anchorage. The Municipality was formed in the mid-seventies after the City of Anchorage and the Greater Anchorage Area Borough were merged. In Eagle River, the Municipality provides the community with police, fire, educational, and limited sewer services. But, local road maintenance and water service are provided by neighborhood associations. One Assemblyperson represents the Eagle River-Chugiak region (as well as parts of eastern Anchorage) on the eleven-member Municipal Assembly.

The Municipal Community Planning Department is responsible for planning activities in the area. In 1979, a comprehensive plan for the Eagle River-Chugiak region was prepared. The plan was adopted by the Municipal Assembly and is used as a guide for Municipal land use decisions in the area. Other recent planning studies conducted in the region include the Eagle River-Chugiak Parks and Open Space Plan (1981) and the Eagle River Coastal Trail Plan (1981).



The major commercial/employment center of the Eagle River-Chugiak region is downtown Eagle River. The downtown area is located next to the Eagle River interchange of the New Glenn Highway. Several shopping centers and small office buildings, two banks, service stations, and strip commercial businesses comprise the Eagle River business district. Most of the commercial development in downtown Eagle River has been built within the last ten years. Substantial new development is anticipated as the community grows in the next few years.

In the summer of 1981, during public meetings held to discuss park and open space needs and the coastal trail in Eagle River, several area residents expressed a desire to see a plan developed for downtown Eagle River. They felt that the downtown area was developing into an ugly commercial strip like several arterial roads in Anchorage. Traffic congestion, poorly designed and sited buildings, and lack of adequate open space were problems in the downtown area that needed to be addressed. Because of citizen support and the anticipated rapid population growth of Eagle River, the Planning Department decided that a study of downtown Eagle River would be worthwhile. I was working with the Planning Department on the Eagle River Coastal Trail project as a summer intern and wanted to return to Alaska. I asked to conduct the downtown study to fulfill my thesis requirement at M.I.T. The Planning Department agreed to hire me on a four-month contract to study the Eagle River business area and to prepare recommendations to deal with the downtown's problems. I returned to Alaska in January, 1982 to begin the study.

The downtown study was conducted with extensive citizen participation. The participation model used in the study

was patterned after a citizen participation process Professor Phil Herr developed for town planning projects in New England. Three workshops were held with the Eagle River public during the four-month study. At the first workshop, problems and assets of downtown Eagle River were identified, and possible improvement strategies were discussed. The public at the second workshop was presented with various options and implementation strategies to improve upon the problems and assets of the downtown area. The public was asked to determine what options and implementation strategies were most appropriate for downtown Eagle River. At the third workshop, a set of recommendations for downtown Eagle River was presented to the public. Feedback from residents was solicited and modifications to the recommendations were made.

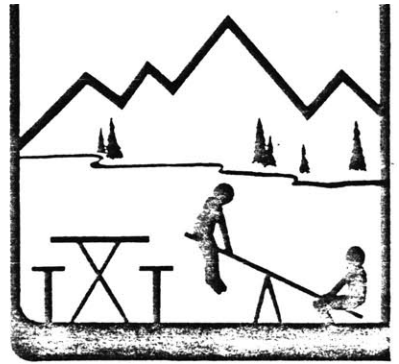
The study yielded two products --a plan for the Municipality and a short report for the citizens of Eagle River. The plan is a document written for the Municipality which outlines recommendations that should be adopted and implemented by the Municipality of Anchorage. The plan, before adoption, must be reviewed by the Anchorage Planning and Zoning Commission and approved by the Municipal Assembly. The plan that I submitted to the Planning Department likely will be modified before it is finally adopted by the Municipality. The short report for the citizens of Eagle River summarizes the recommendations made in the plan and discusses how citizens can monitor the implementation of the recommendations. The short report will be mailed to all participants of the workshops and will be made available to the remainder of the public at several locations in Eagle River.

The following thesis is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, the plan for the Municipality is presented. The second chapter includes the short report developed for

the citizens of Eagle River. The final chapter provides some reflections on my Alaskan experience.

CHAPTER 1: DOWNTOWN EAGLE RIVER STUDY (DRAFT)

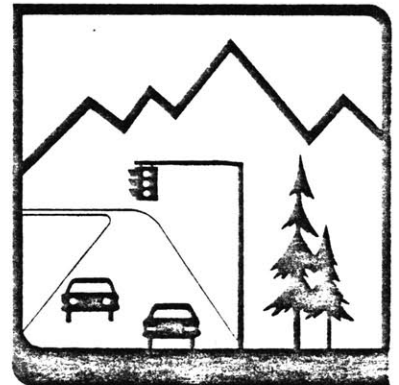
DOWNTOWN EAGLE RIVER STUDY



PARKS &
OPEN SPACE



COMMUNITY
FACILITIES



TRANSPORTATION



DOWNTOWN
DEVELOPMENT



THE MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
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INTRODUCTION

The Eagle River-Chugiak-Eklutna region of the Municipality has changed markedly in the last decade. In 1970, the region had a population of about 5800. By 1980, the population of the area had jumped to almost 12,900. Since the 1980 census count, the Eagle River-Chugiak-Eklutna area population has grown to about 14,500. The population of the region is now the fastest growing and fifth largest in Alaska.

The Eagle River Central Business District which serves as the major commercial and employment center of the region is also changing rapidly. Within the last decade, shopping centers, office buildings, and apartment complexes have been constructed. The Old Glenn Highway is being expanded to five lanes and a major shopping center is planned along Business Boulevard.

Although rapid growth in the business area has been an economic boon, problems have arisen. Traffic congestion that was once confined to Anchorage has spread to Eagle River. New developments have been designed and built without considering traffic circulation, topography, and neighboring development in the area. Demand for parks and trails in downtown Eagle River is growing while land for such facilities is decreasing. Strip commercial development lines the Old Glenn Highway. Downtown building lots have been stripped of their natural vegetation and topsoil. These and other problems detract from the Eagle River downtown area, making the business district less like the "small town" Alaskan community residents want.

Eagle River residents like the "small town" Alaskan quality of their community. They want to see low density development, green space in the downtown area, and easy accessibility preserved as the community grows. Residents appreciate the small town atmosphere of Eagle River where people know each other and can shop at locally-run businesses. Buildings in the downtown area are small-scale and the skyline is dominated by the nearby mountains. Wooded areas, bogs, and ponds can still be found in the downtown area. The business area, bordered by the New Glenn Highway, is easily accessible to Anchorage and the Matanuska Valley.

There will be pressure to develop other commercial and employment centers in the region as the population of the Eagle River-Chugiak-Eklutna region grows. To ensure that downtown Eagle River remains the primary commercial and employment center, it must maintain a competitive edge. The

problems currently facing downtown Eagle River make the business area less attractive to developers, shoppers and employers. These problems could encourage the development of businesses and offices in dispersed locations outside of the downtown area. Most residents feel that downtown Eagle River should remain the central focus of the region and want to see major problems addressed.

The purpose of the Downtown Eagle River Study is to identify the major problems and major assets of downtown Eagle River and to propose recommendations that deal with the problems and enhance the assets. The recommendations presented in the plan seek:

- 1) to make downtown Eagle River a good place to live, work, and invest; and
- 2) to give Eagle River citizens the opportunity to influence decisions that affect their community.

The recommendations fall into three categories - Capital Improvement Requests, Land Management Recommendations, and Municipal Actions. The Capital Improvement requests identify and give a priority to public facility needs in downtown Eagle River. The Land Management recommendations outline a definite course to be followed by the Municipality in decisions affecting development in Eagle River. The Municipal Actions recommendations identify specific tasks the Municipality should undertake to make Eagle River a better place to live and work.

The Downtown Eagle River Plan was written by the Municipal Planning Department with the endorsement of the Eagle River Community Council, the Eagle River Valley Community Council, and the Eagle River Chamber of Commerce.

PLAN FORMAT

The first section of the plan discusses land use in Eagle River. The next section presents the policies that guided the preparation of the plan. The third section describes the process used to identify major problems in Eagle River and to develop recommendations to deal with those problems. The fourth section discusses capital improvement funding methods. The fifth section outlines the major problem areas in downtown Eagle River and presents the recommendations. The final section summarizes the recommendations and categorizes them as Capital Improvement, Land Management or Municipal Action recommendations.

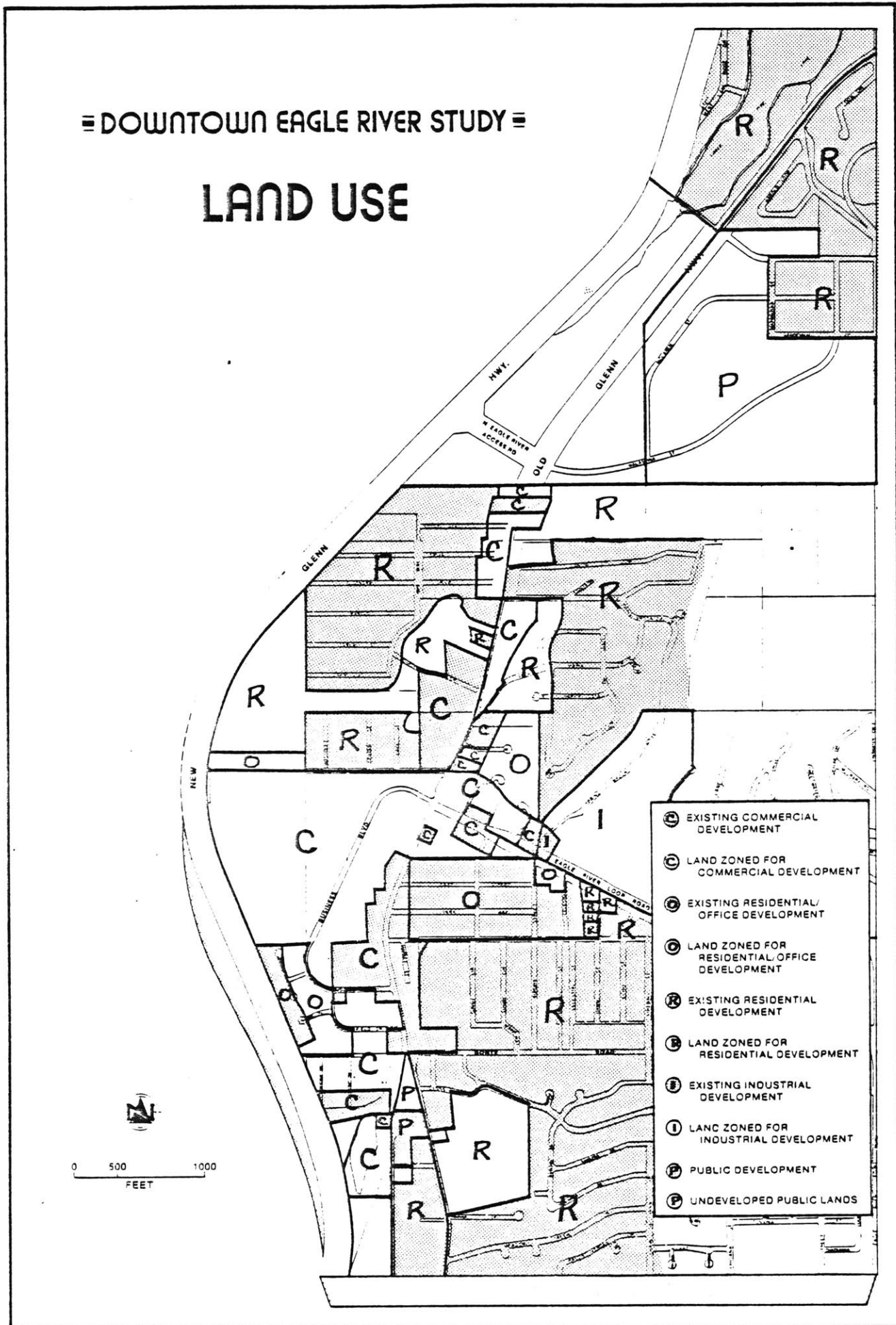
LAND USE IN EAGLE RIVER

A survey of existing land use in Eagle River shows that commercial development is primarily concentrated along the Old Glenn Highway between Eagle River Loop Road and Monte Road. This commercial center is the most densely developed in Eagle River and includes restaurants, stores, and small shopping centers. Commercial development that is more auto-oriented lines the Old Glenn Highway north of Eagle River Loop Road and south of Monte Road. To the east of the Old Glenn Highway, the land is primarily in residential use. Residential uses also dominate the land west of the Old Glenn Highway and north of Farm Avenue. South of Farm Avenue, there is a large tract of undeveloped land, known as Pippel Field, that stretches to the Carr's Shopping Center. South and west of the Carr's Shopping Center, office and apartment complexes have been built.

In 1979, the Eagle River-Chugiak-Eklutna Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Municipal Assembly. The plan was developed after a series of meetings with citizens of the region. The plan outlined a land use concept that envisions a strong retail commercial core in downtown Eagle River with office and residential uses on the periphery. The retail core would be centered around existing commercial development on the Old Glenn Highway. The core would extend from Monte Road on the south to Eagle River Loop Road on the north and would stretch from the east edge of the Old Glenn Highway westward into Pippel Field. In the plan, shopping centers, grocery stores, and restaurants would comprise the retail core. Outside of the core, car washes, motels, service stations, and other auto-oriented businesses would develop in a strip along the Old Glenn Highway between the North Glenn and Eagle River Highway exits. To the west of Pippel Field, a mixed commercial and office area of shops, banks, and offices is envisioned. The areas to the south and east of the planned retail core would develop as high density residential and office uses. North and west of the retail core, pockets of multi-family residential development are envisioned while the remainder of the downtown area would develop into medium density (single-family and duplex) residential uses. Existing Land Use and the land use concept are presented on the Land Use Map.

≡ DOWNTOWN EAGLE RIVER STUDY ≡

LAND USE



For the most part, zoning in the downtown area is consistent with the land use concept presented in the Comprehensive Plan. The retail core area is zoned B-3 (General and Strip Commercial Development District) which allows office and retail commercial uses as well as automotive-oriented commercial uses. The area west of Pippel Field, although envisioned as an office/retail commercial area, is also zoned B-3, as is the strip of auto-oriented commercial development along the Old Glenn Highway. Areas envisioned in high density residential or office uses have been zoned R-0 (Residential-Office District), a zoning district which allows both types of development. Areas planned for medium density residential development have been placed in zoning districts R-1A (Single-Family Residential District), R-2 (Two-family Residential District), R-3 (Multi-Family Residential District), R-5 (Rural Residential District), and R-7 (Intermediate Rural Residential District).

This Plan for Eagle River looks more closely at land use relationships in the downtown area. Issues such as development characteristics at the edges of zoning districts, incompatible land use buffering, citizens participation in development decisions, and the location of future community facilities are considered. The land use concept presented in the 1979 Comprehensive Plan is used as a basis for the Downtown Eagle River Plan. The policies used to develop the recommendations presented in this study are based upon the land use concept and are detailed in the next section.

POLICIES

The following policies are based on the land use concept presented in the 1979 Comprehensive Plan. They reflect Eagle River residents' desire to see the Eagle River Central Business District develop into the area's primary employment and retail center. The business center would be accessible, aesthetically pleasing, and centrally focused.

- 1) Acquisition and development of parks, and bicycle/pedestrian trail systems in downtown Eagle River to provide recreation space for nearby residents and shoppers, to act as buffer areas between conflicting land uses, and to provide alternative access to residential and commercial areas should be given a high priority.
- 2) Automobile, transit, and pedestrian accessibility improvements should be given a high priority in downtown Eagle River.
- 3) Community facilities that would draw people into downtown Eagle River should be located in the center of the central business district rather than on the periphery. The location of new community facilities should take into account the residents' desire to see a centrally focused downtown.
- 4) Strip commercial development extending outside the downtown area should be avoided.
- 5) Good site, architectural and signage design should be encouraged in downtown Eagle River to make the place more aesthetically pleasing, and to add continuity and create a "sense of place" in the downtown area.
- 6) Citizens should be given an opportunity to participate in downtown development decisions.

FUNDING:

Some of the recommendations presented in this plan identify public facility needs in Eagle River. Three funding avenues are available to finance these capital improvement requests.

One financing mechanism is a legislative grant. With this funding method, the Municipality requests a grant from the State Legislature to fund a particular project. This method of financing has been frequently used in recent years. But as state revenues shrink, this funding option may be less reliable.

A second funding mechanism is the issuance of Municipal General Obligation Bonds. With this method, Municipal Bonds are sold in the bond market. Proceeds are used to finance a capital project. The bond debts are amortized by increasing property taxes to cover the bond costs. Before Municipal General Obligation Bonds are issued, voters in the area where taxes will be increased must approve the bond sale. Historically, the issuance of Municipal Bonds to finance capital projects has not been popular in Eagle River.

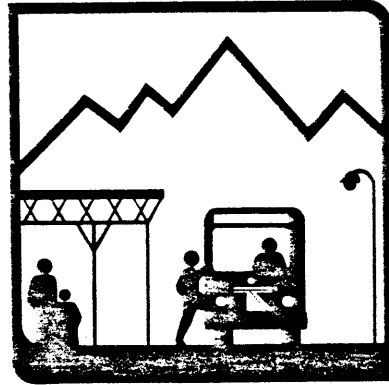
A third funding option is to use funds from the sale of "surplus" Municipal property to finance capital projects. With this strategy, the Municipality can sell or exchange public lands that are not appropriate for Municipal use and use the returns to build capital projects or to acquire property in areas where Municipal land is needed. This funding strategy is particularly appropriate for Eagle River as the Municipality owns several parcels of land in the area that would be well-suited for private development. The sale of "surplus" land to finance capital projects has not been previously used by the Municipality.

PROBLEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

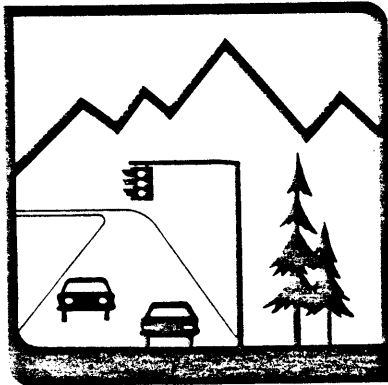
Four major themes emerged from the first public workshop - the lack of parks and open space, the need for community facilities, the concern over aesthetics and downtown development, and the need for good transportation. Problems and recommendations associated with each theme are discussed in the following section.



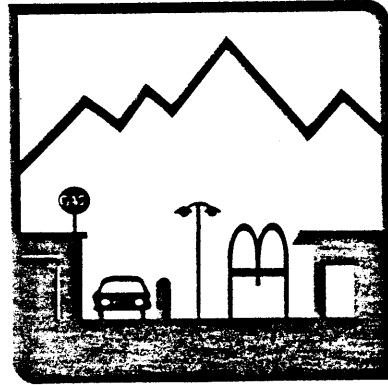
**PARKS &
OPEN SPACE**



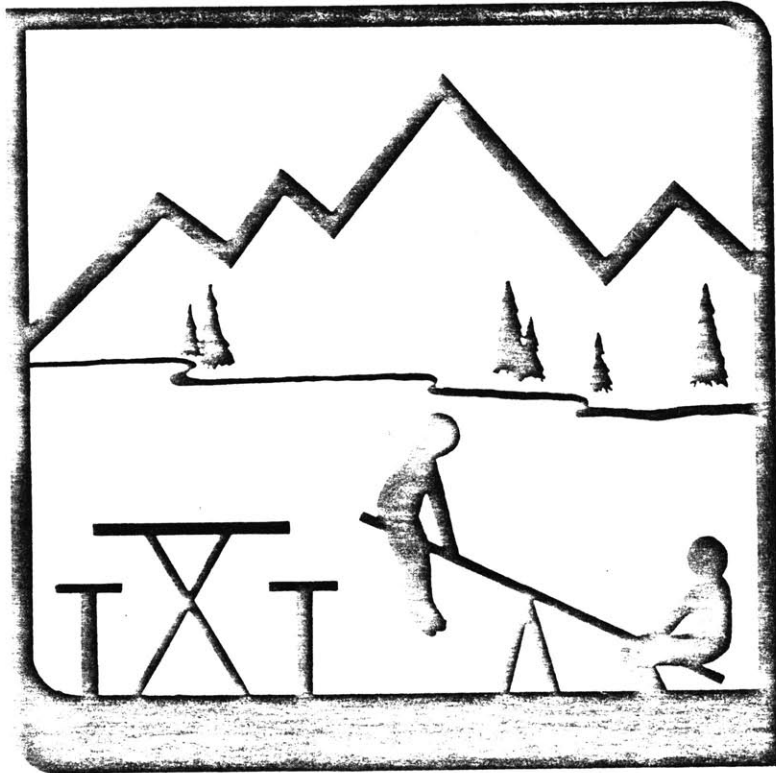
**COMMUNITY
FACILITIES**



TRANSPORTATION



**DOWNTOWN
DEVELOPMENT**



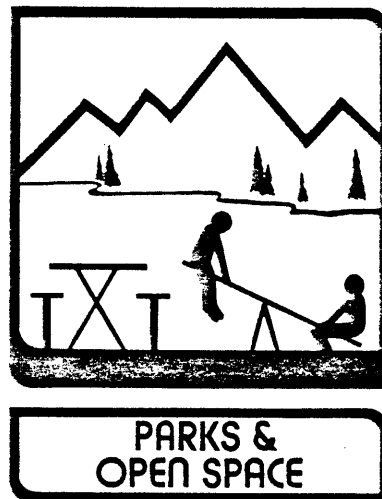
PARKS &
OPEN SPACE

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

The lack of parks, walkways, and bicycle trails in downtown Eagle River is a major concern of Eagle River residents. Residents want a trail system that connects major public facilities in the downtown area, a major park for active recreation, and a small downtown park.

In the past, when the downtown area was less developed, open space for recreational use was readily available. Now, undeveloped land that can be used for recreational purposes is rapidly decreasing. Within the next year, for example, the Pippel Field area will be developed into a commercial center and the vacant land to the north and west of Farm Avenue is being proposed for small lot (6000 square feet) single-family residential development. These developments will use about 70 acres of undeveloped land and will bring in hundreds of new shoppers and residents.

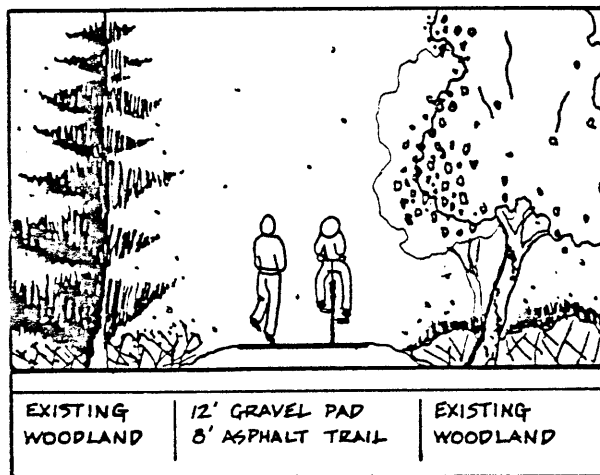
To ensure that adequate land for recreational use is available in downtown Eagle River, action must be taken now. This section designates lands in the downtown area that would be appropriate for park and open space use and discusses the acquisition options available to the community.



Downtown Trail System: Trails and walkways are needed in downtown Eagle River to connect neighborhoods, parks, commercial areas, and major public facilities with each other. These corridors of preserved woodland vegetation or new plantings act as buffer zones between different land uses (e.g., businesses and residences) and provide an alternative path to the street for pedestrians and bicyclists. Also, trail corridors are used for linear recreational activities like cross-country skiing and jogging. The trail system would connect sidewalks in the downtown area to provide pedestrian and bicycle access to as much of the business district as possible.

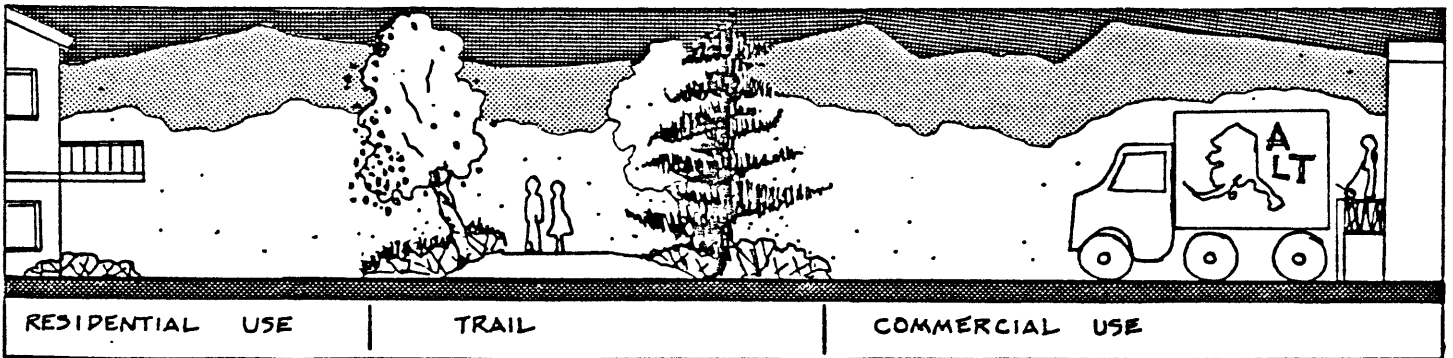
A trail system in downtown Eagle River should connect the Eagle River Elementary School, the downtown commercial area, the neighborhoods to the west of the Old Glenn Highway, and the planned Recreation Center near the North Glenn Highway interchange. Presently, a biketrail/greenbelt exists within the New Glenn Highway right-of-way but does not link the Recreation Center site to the Eagle River Elementary School. Also, a pedestrian/bicycle trail will be constructed along the Old Glenn Highway from the Eagle River Road interchange to the North Glenn interchange. Neither trail offers much separation from the highway. The trail along the Old Glenn Highway could be dangerous for children because of frequent street and driveway crossings.

Trail Section



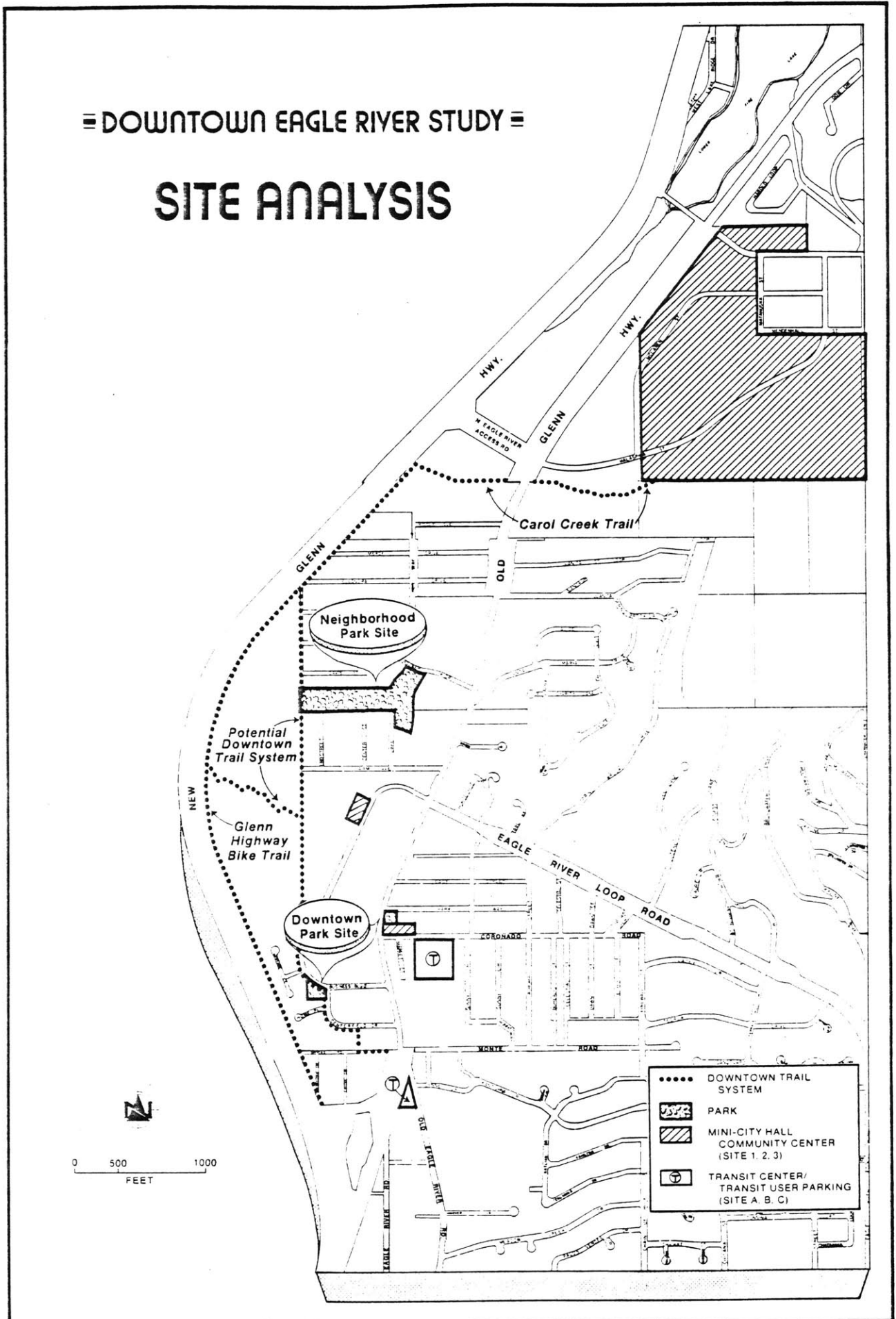
The proposed trail system for downtown Eagle River is shown on the Site Analysis Map. The northernmost segment of the proposed system would run along the Carol Creek drainage from the Recreation Center Site to the New Glenn Highway. Part of the proposed Carol Creek trail (near the Old Glenn Highway) has been developed into a small park area and pond by Larry Thomas, owner of the Eagle River Car Wash. The pond and adjacent wooded area is now a duck nesting area. This section of the Carol Creek greenbelt lies along an unused road right-of-way and could be acquired for a trail by redesignating the land to a park. The remainder of the Carol Creek section of the trail could be acquired through fee-simple purchase or easement negotiation. The second part of the downtown trail system would utilize the New Glenn Highway biketrail/greenbelt from Carol Creek to Elenora Road. No Municipal acquisition of property would be required for this section of the trail system as the biketrail/greenbelt lies within the State DOT right-of-way. At Elenora Road, the proposed trail would turn southward and follow a straight line past Farm Avenue to Business Boulevard. This third section of the trail would intersect and run parallel to Business Boulevard west of Carr's Shopping Center. This section of the proposed trail system is crucial because it not only provides a link between residential and commercial areas, but acts as a buffer zone as well. This portion of the trail could be acquired through easement negotiation and/or fee-simple purchase. The fourth section of the trail system would run along the west side of Business Boulevard and Centerfield Drive, behind the Alaska Bank of Commerce, to the proposed pedestrian overpass on the Old Glenn Highway. From the overpass, the trail would proceed to the Eagle River Elementary School. This section of the trail system could be acquired through easement negotiation and/or fee-simple purchase.

Downtown Trail as a Buffer Zone



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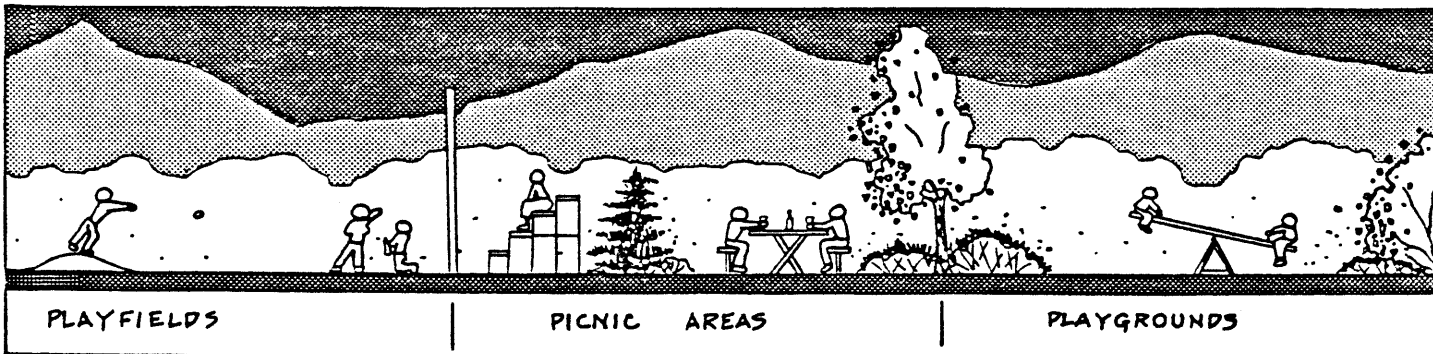
SITE ANALYSIS



Neighborhood Park: The residential areas north of Eagle River Loop Road and south of the North Glenn Access are not served by a major park with playground equipment, picnic areas, and ballfields. The nearest park with these facilities is the Lions Park three miles away. According to the Eagle River Parks and Open Space Plan, the downtown Eagle River area is deficient of about 10 acres of neighborhood park land. In the past, undeveloped open space in the area was used for active recreation. Now, much of the open land is being developed.

The rarely used Schroeder Air Strip and adjoining two ponds, accessible to nearby residents and shoppers, is an ideal location for a major park. The air strip could be used for playfields while the ground sloping to the ponds could be developed into a playground area. One pond, which is presently cluttered with debris, could be filled and developed into a ballfield. The other pond, with its wooded shoreline, could be preserved and used as an ice-skating area during the winter. The ponds would not only provide open space for the adjoining neighborhoods but would act as a buffer to separate residences from nearby commercial service and truck access areas. The western shoreline of the northern pond should remain in the private ownership of the abutting residences. The acquisition of the Schroeder Air Strip and adjoining ponds requires fee-simple purchase of the property.

Neighborhood Park



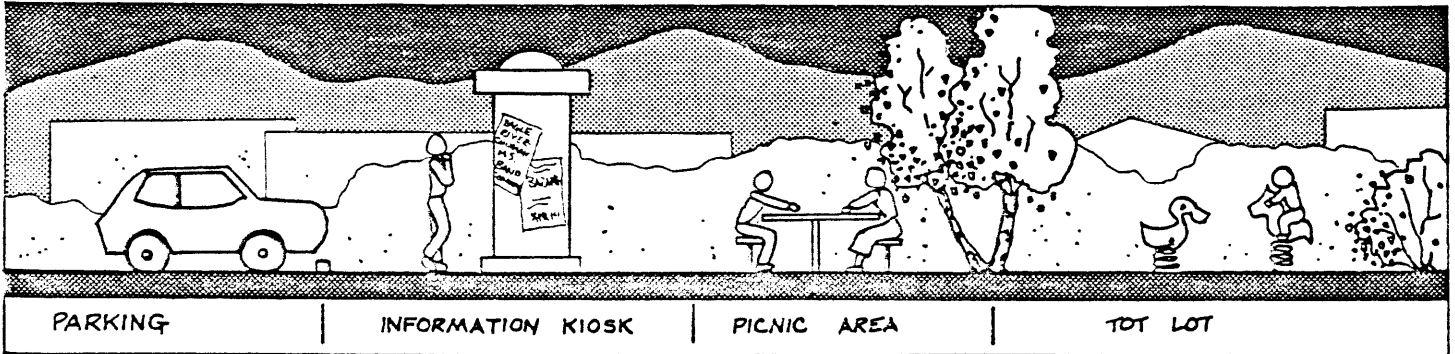
Downtown Park A small downtown park can provide a play

area for children of shoppers and residents, can act as a buffer between residential and commercial uses, can create a focal point for the downtown area, and can be a visual amenity. In downtown Eagle River, two alternative locations for a downtown park have been identified. (See the Site Analysis Map).

One location is on the west side of Business Boulevard across from the proposed Post Office site. The advantages of this site are that the park would connect to the proposed trail system and would be accessible for children of shoppers and residents. A park at this location would also be a visual amenity and would act as a buffer between commercial and residential land uses.

The second location is north of the present Post Office site. The major advantages of this site are that it is located in the center of the downtown area and would be visible from the Old Glenn Highway. The site would also be accessible to children of shoppers and residents, and would act as a buffer between residential and commercial uses.

Downtown Park



The acquisition and development of a downtown park site would require the purchase of property and inclusion of the park request into the Municipal Capital Improvement Program.

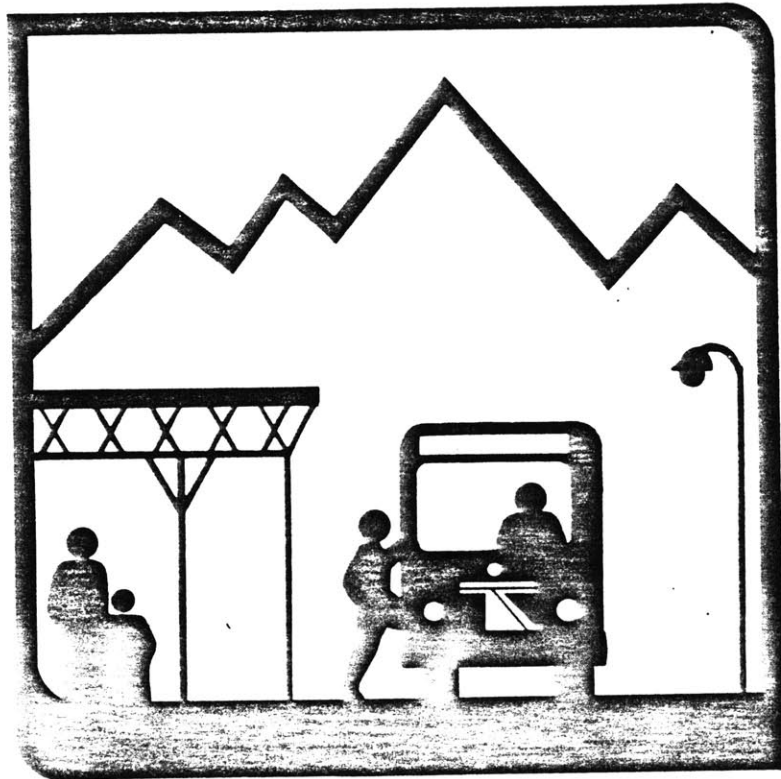
Recommendation: Meetings with the public indicate that the

development of Schroeder Air Strip and ponds into a neighborhood park should be the first funding priority with the trail system and downtown park following in lesser priority.

Since all three projects require funding, initial monies should be spent acquiring the Schroeder Air Strip and ponds. Any subsequent funding could be used to acquire trail lands and a downtown park site.

The need for safe walkways and trails was also ranked as a high priority by the public. Some parts of the proposed trail system may be secured without funds by negotiation of easements across private property (through the plat review process). This avenue of securing trail corridors should begin immediately.

Part of the Carol Creek portion of the proposed greenbelt system lies along an unused road right-of-way. Negotiations with the proper government agencies (Alaska Department of Transportation; Municipal Property Management) should begin immediately to redesignate that portion of the proposed trail system to park land.



**COMMUNITY
FACILITIES**

COMMUNITY FACILITIES:

Three major community facility needs in downtown Eagle River were identified by citizens at the workshops. The needs include a mini-City Hall/Community Center complex, a transit center, and park and ride lots for transit users.

Mini-City Hall/Community Center:

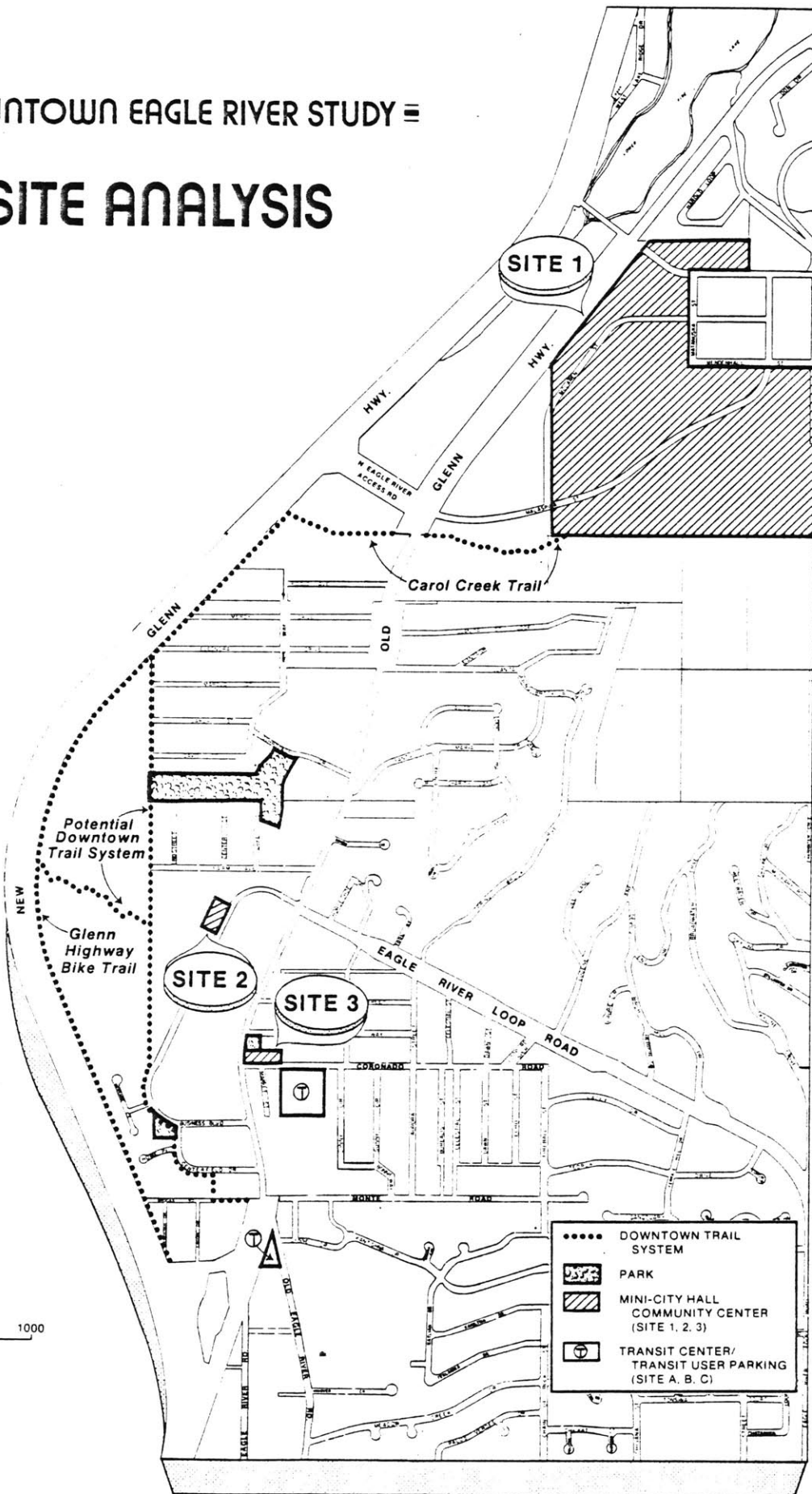
The mini-City Hall/Community Center complex would initially house a Municipal permitting center and the Eagle River-Chugiak Police and Parks personnel. It would also provide community meeting space. Eventually, such a complex could be enlarged to include expanded Municipal office space, the library and other cultural facilities. The complex should be centrally located and accessible to autos and transit. The site should have adequate parking space, and room for expansion of facilities.

Three sites for the City Hall complex were analyzed - the proposed Recreation Center site, a site along the proposed Business Boulevard, and a site at the corner of Coranado Avenue and the Old Glenn Highway. (See map).



≡ DOWNTOWN EAGLE RIVER STUDY ≡

SITE ANALYSIS



Site 1 - The proposed Recreation Center Site -

The 135 acre proposed Recreation Center site was chosen as a possible site for the mini-City Hall primarily because the Municipality presently owns the land and no site acquisition funds would be necessary. Also, construction of the facility could begin in 1982. The site is large and offers plenty of room for expansion. At a future date, the site could easily accommodate a mini-City Hall, a recreation center, a transit facility, a transit user parking lot, and a community center. The site has good access to the New Glenn Highway and to Chugiak, Birchwood, Peters Creek and Eklutna.

The major disadvantage of the site is its location on the periphery of the downtown area. Eagle River residents spoke up at the workshops for a centrally focused downtown area. The land use concept presented in the 1979 Comprehensive Plan also calls for a strong central retail core in Eagle River. A Municipal facility like a community center and City Hall would generate increased activity in the downtown area and would help define a strong central core for Eagle River. The location of city offices in the center of the retail area would allow patrons to take advantage of adjacent shopping facilities. Site 1 is located on the edge of the Eagle River business area and would draw City Hall and community center users away from the downtown core.

Site 2 - Tract Along the Proposed Business Boulevard -

The 60,000 square foot lot along the proposed Business Boulevard lies in the heart of the retail core envisioned in the 1979 Comprehensive Plan. This site is close to planned and existing commercial development and could easily be developed as the "center" of the downtown area. Site 2 is more accessible to Eagle River and Eagle River Valley residents than is Site 1. But the site is relatively less accessible to the residents of Chugiak, Birchwood, and Eklutna. The site could accommodate a mini-City Hall, a small park, a transit center and a transit user parking lot for about 70 cars. Additional parking for transit riders could possibly be obtained by utilizing the private parking of nearby commercial businesses.

The two major disadvantages of Site 2 are its size and cost. The site size is small - approximately 1½ acres. Major expansion of the City Hall or the construction of a community center would remove parking on the site and

might require purchase of additional land. The cost of the site is estimated to exceed \$600,000.

Site 3 - The Post Office lot and the adjacent lot to the East

Site 3, about 50,000 square feet in size, is located on the corner of Coronado Avenue and the Old Glenn Highway. This site, like Site 2, lies in the center of the retail core envisioned in the 1979 Comprehensive Plan. Site 3 is very accessible to planned and existing retail establishments and could become a focal point for the downtown area. Because of its location on the Old Glenn Highway, Site 3 is relatively accessible to all areas in the Eagle River-Chugiak-Eklutna region. The site could accommodate a mini-City Hall, a small park, a transit center, and perhaps a community center. The site contains existing structures that would have to be removed before any new facilities could be built. Parking accommodations for transit users and additional open space could be provided by acquiring the 3-4 acre gravel pit property on the south side of Coronado Road. If Site 3 and the gravel pit property are acquired in tandem, expansion of facilities would not be a problem.

The major disadvantage of Site 3 is cost. The cost of acquiring Site 3 and the gravel pit is estimated to be over \$600,000.

To acquire Site 2 or Site 3, the land purchase would need to be included in the Municipal Capital Improvement Program.

Recommendation:

From a locational standpoint, Site 3 is the superior site for a community center/City Hall complex. But from a cost standpoint, Site 1 is presently the best site. Given that money has already been approved to build a small mini-City Hall, Site 1 should be used. In 5 years, however, the adequacy of the mini-City Hall structure and site should be evaluated. At that time, if a larger facility is needed, a downtown location should be reconsidered.

Downtown Municipal Property:

The Municipality probably will require land in downtown Eagle River for public facilities within the next 10 years. A branch library, a cultural/community meeting center, a new town hall, and a new transit center are all public facili-

ties that might be needed in Eagle River during the next decade. Optimally, these facilities should be downtown.

The gravel pit behind the North Slope Restaurant, and the present Post Office lot and adjacent lot to the east would be good sites for Municipal facilities requiring downtown locations. Unfortunately, the cost of acquiring these sites is great. Acquisition of downtown property with the use of State grants and Municipal General Obligation Bonds is not justified at this time. The Municipality could use funds from the sale of "surplus" Municipal property to acquire this property.

Recommendation:

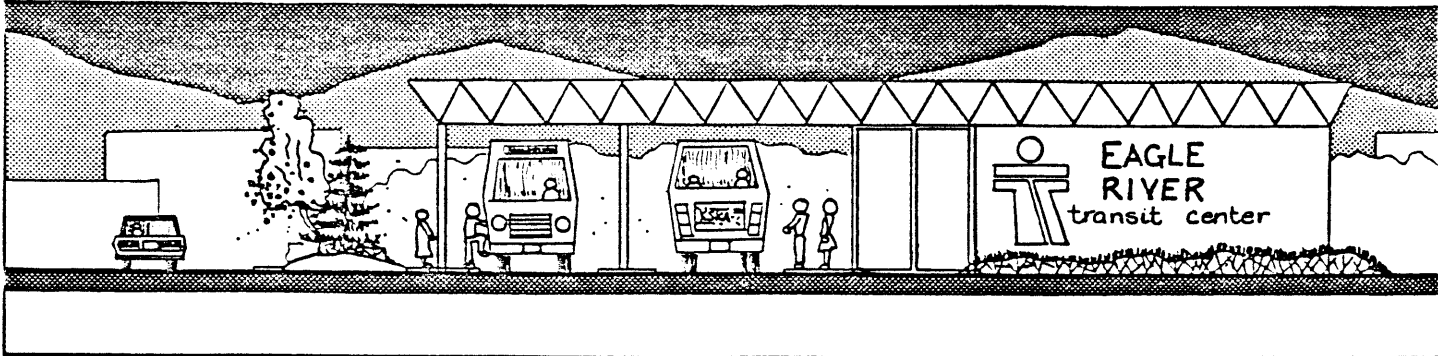
The Municipality should explore the feasibility of selling "surplus" Municipal lands to purchase private property in areas where Municipal land is needed. If this funding method is feasible, the Municipality should acquire property in downtown Eagle River for future Municipal use. The gravel pit behind the North Slope Restaurant, and the present Post Office lot and adjacent lot to the east would be good sites for future Municipal facilities downtown.

Transit Center

A transit center would serve as the major transfer point for passengers in Eagle River when transit service is eventually expanded to Eagle River Valley and other areas of the Eagle River-Chugiak-Eklutna region. A transit center could be built on a small amount of land and would contain a small waiting area, an information booth, and pull-out bays for buses.

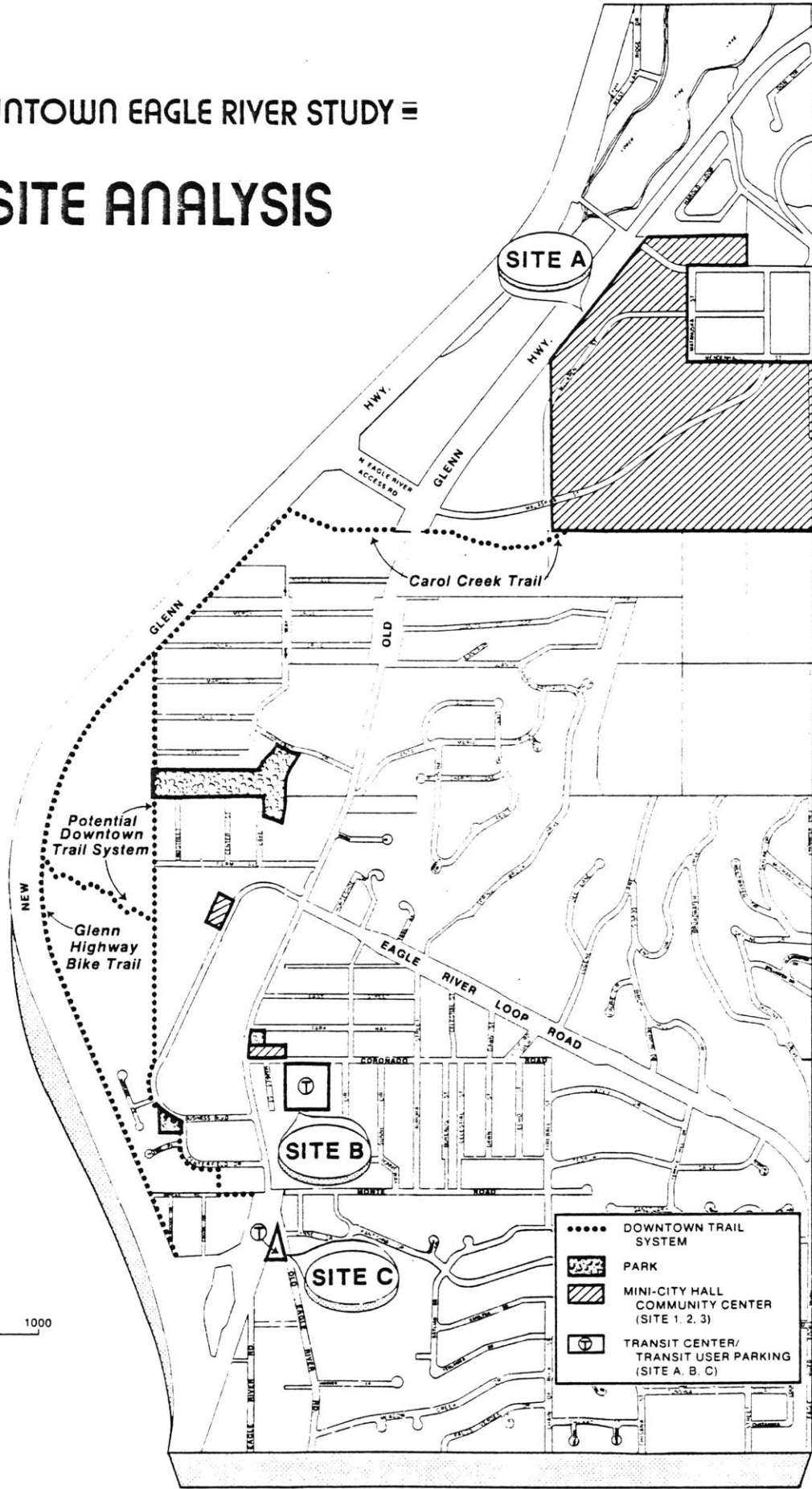
Three transit center locations were considered - the proposed Recreation Center site, the gravel extraction site on Coronado Avenue, and the DOT property just north of the Eagle River Elementary School. (See Map)

Eagle River Transit Center



≡ DOWNTOWN EAGLE RIVER STUDY ≡

SITE ANALYSIS



Site A - The Recreation Center Site

Site A is an adequate site for a transit center. A transit building could easily be incorporated into the planned mini-City Hall. A transit center at this location, however, would not allow transferring passengers to shop or browse in downtown Eagle River while waiting for their next bus. Also, this location is relatively inconvenient to Eagle River Valley residents.

Site B - The Gravel Extraction Site

Site B is a good location for a transit center. The site is located in the center of Eagle River's commercial and employment area and would allow transit users to shop at nearby businesses. A transit center in this central location would be convenient to most residents in the Eagle River-Chugiak area. Also, because the transit center is to be used as a transfer station, a downtown location is desirable.

Site C - The Department of Transportation property north of Eagle River Elementary School

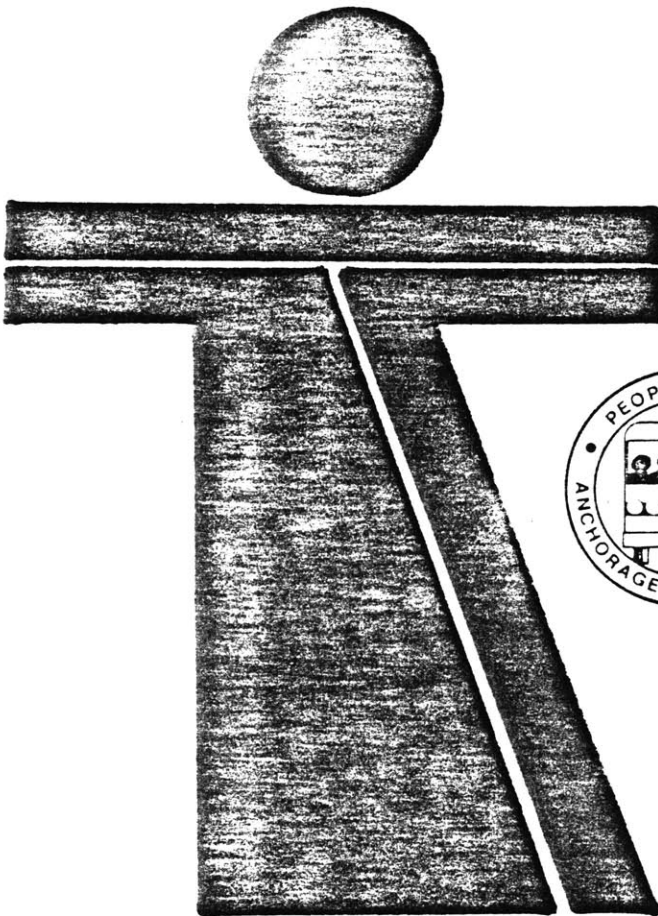
The site would be adequate for a transit center. The location is centrally located and would be convenient to Eagle River and Eagle River Valley residents. Site C would be adequate as a transfer station because of its close proximity to Eagle River's downtown business area. A transit center at this location might be a safety hazard to Eagle River Elementary School children and could create traffic congestion along the Old Glenn Highway during rush hours.

Recommendation:

From a locational standpoint, the transit center should be built at Site B. Unfortunately, lack of funds currently prevents the acquisition of Site B. If, in the future, Site B cannot be acquired, the transit center should be located at another downtown location. Possible transit center locations include the Carr's Shopping Center, the present Post Office site or a site near the old Matanuska Electric Association offices. Funds for the Transit Center would be provided through the Municipal AMATS Program.

Park and Ride Lots for Transit Users:

Many Eagle River residents work in Anchorage. To reduce rush hour traffic congestion and to encourage energy conservation in Eagle River, transit use for work-related trips should be increased. Transit use can be encouraged by providing Park and Ride lots. Park and Ride Lots provide transit commuters with space to store their cars during working hours. Small bus waiting huts and car "plug-ins" can also be provided. Park and Ride lots are often used as a terminus for express bus service.



the
people
mover

Three locations for transit user parking locations were considered - the proposed Recreation Center Site, the gravel extraction site on Coronado Avenue, and the Department of Transportation property just north of Eagle River Elementary school. These sites were also considered for a transit center.

Site A - The Recreation Center Site

Site A would be an excellent location for a parking lot for transit users. The location is very accessible to Chugiak, Peters Creek, Birchwood and Eklutna. The accessibility to the New Glenn Highway would make the site a good express bus station for Anchorage commuters. Since the property is owned by the Municipality, no site acquisition funds are needed.

Site B - The Gravel Extraction Site

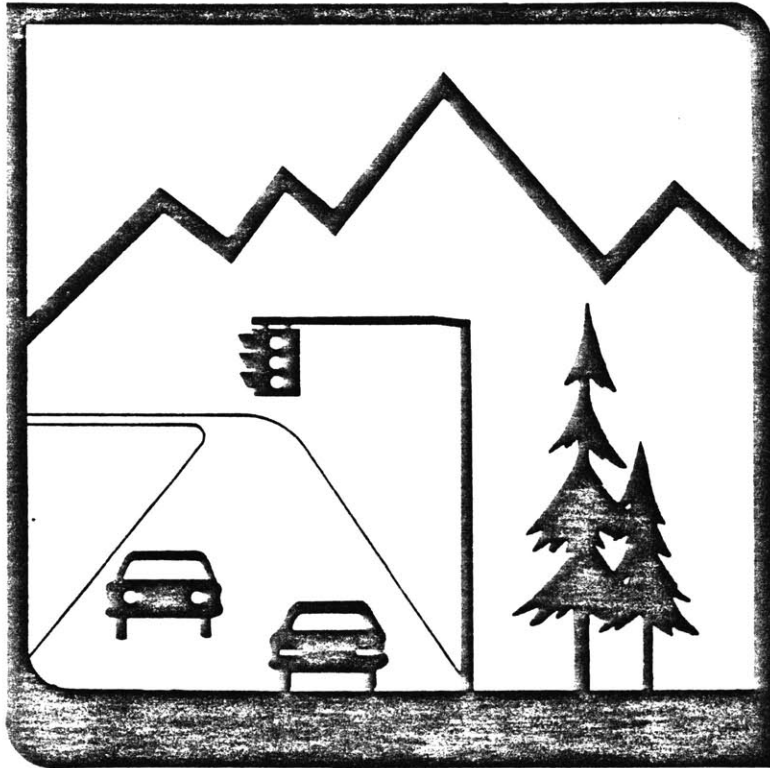
The gravel pit site would be an excellent location for a parking lot for transit users. The site is accessible to Eagle River Valley and Eagle River residents and is located in the heart of the business area. The disadvantage of Site B is that it is not Municipally-owned and would need to be acquired.

Site C - The Department of Transportation property north of Eagle River Elementary School

Site C would be an adequate location for a parking lot for transit users. A commuter parking lot at this location would be accessible to Eagle River and Eagle River Valley residents. Also, the easy access to the New Glenn Highway would make this site a good express bus station for Anchorage-bound commuters. A parking lot at this location could confound traffic congestion at the intersection of the Old Glenn Highway and Eagle River Road during rush hours. Traffic at the site could also create a safety hazard for children attending the adjacent Eagle River Elementary School. The property is owned by the State and would not require site acquisition funds.

Recommendation:

A parking lot for transit users should be established at Site A. A parking lot at the proposed Recreation Center (Site A) could be used jointly by transit users and mini-City Hall patrons. Site C can also be developed into a commuter parking lot with minimal cost. The safety and traffic impacts of a parking lot at Site C should be studied, however, before Site C is developed.



TRANSPORTATION

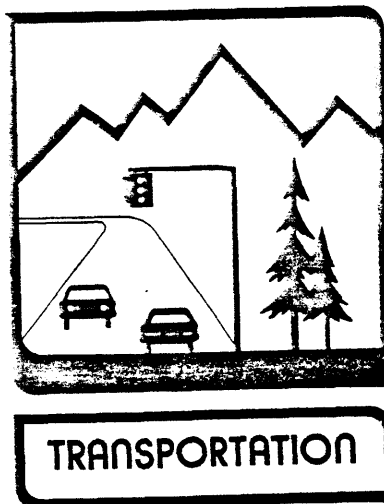
TRANSPORTATION

Traffic congestion in the downtown area is a major concern of Eagle River residents. Three major traffic problems are traffic control on the Old Glenn Highway, traffic congestion at Eagle River Valley Road and the Eagle River interchange, and the possible need for a third interchange onto the New Glenn Highway in the downtown Eagle River area.

Traffic Control along the Old Glenn:

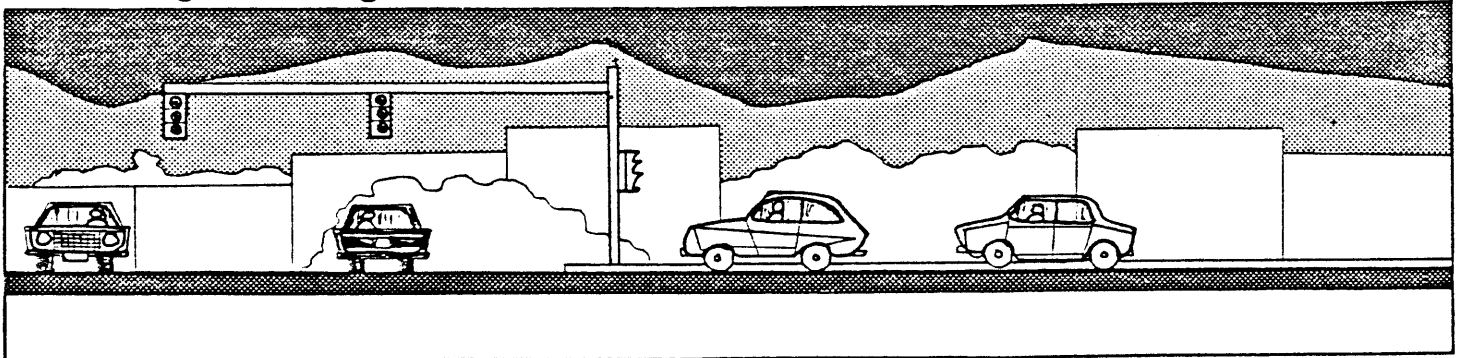
Although the Old Glenn Highway will be widened to 5 lanes in spring 1982 through downtown Eagle River, traffic control is still seen as a problem by local residents. Several intersections along the Old Glenn Highway were singled out as potential traffic hazards. The noted intersections include - Eagle River Valley Road, Monte Road, Business Boulevard, and Eagle River Loop Road. Generally, it was felt that traffic signals would be eventually needed at these intersections to manage traffic in Eagle River. At two of the Old Glenn Highway intersections, Eagle River Valley Road and Eagle River Loop Road, electrical wires have been "laid" to accommodate traffic signals.

The State of Alaska Department of Transportation (ADOT) maintains the Old Glenn Highway in Eagle River and is



responsible for improvements to it. ADOT is also responsible for traffic control along the route. Traffic counts are the major criterion used by the State to determine whether or not a stoplight should be installed at a given intersection. According to State DOT officials, only the Eagle River Valley Road/Old Glenn Highway intersection meets the criteria for a stoplight.

Traffic Signals along the Old Glenn



Recommendation:

The State Department of Transportation is willing to meet with Eagle River residents to discuss transportation projects and traffic management along the Old Glenn Highway. Meetings with the State Department of Transportation should be set up by the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) Committee this Fall.

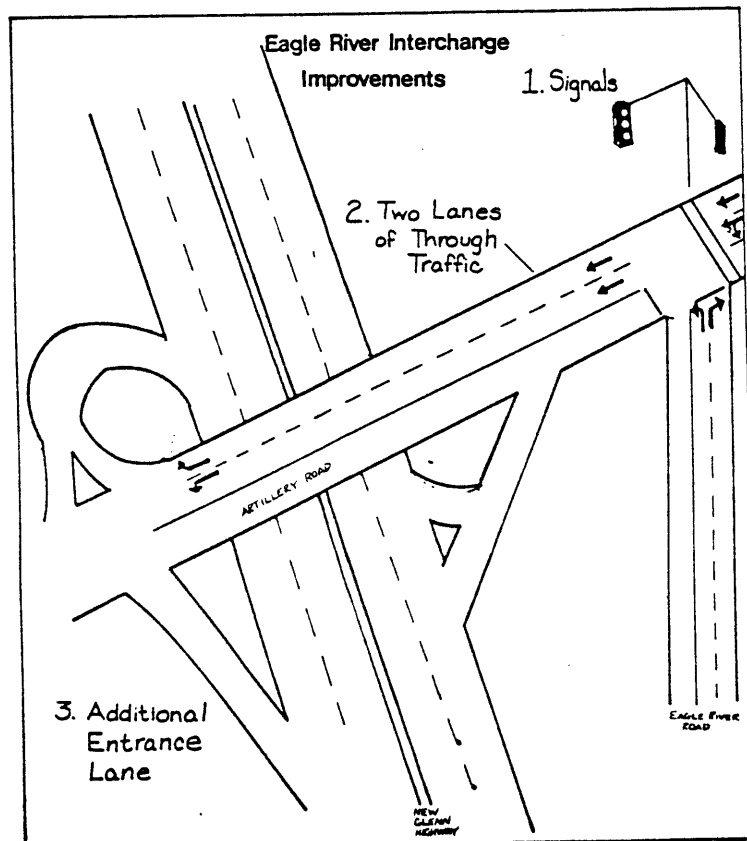
Eagle River Interchange Congestion:

Rush hour traffic congestion at the Eagle River interchange onto the New Glenn Highway is a major concern of Eagle River and Eagle River Valley residents. The heavily used intersection of the Old Glenn Highway and Eagle River Road has created a traffic bottleneck and impedes the access of Anchorage-bound traffic onto the

New Glenn Highway. Presently rush hour traffic moves in an organized way through the intersection because drivers voluntarily take turns proceeding through the intersection.

Recommendation:

To deal with the problem, a three-step improvement program is proposed.¹ These improvements could double the hourly flow of traffic through the intersection and interchange. The improvement program should be reviewed by the AMATS Committee. If the project is deemed appropriate, the committee should request the State Department of Transportation to initiate the improvement program. The 3-step improvement program is outlined below.



¹from Peter Eakland, Alaska Transportation Services, Inc. Eagle River Road Improvement Program, July, 1982.

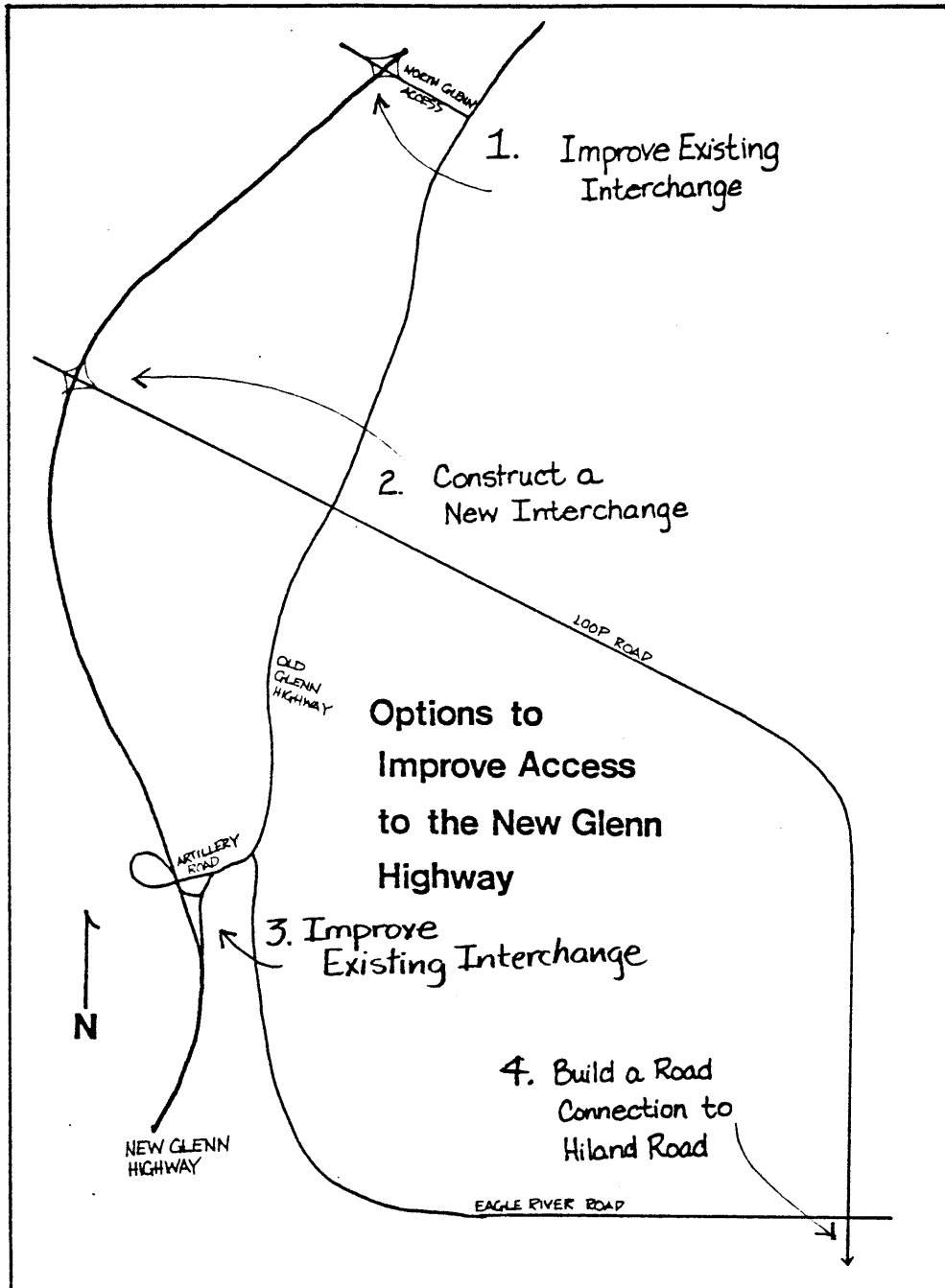
The first step in the improvement program would be to install a stoplight at the intersection of Eagle River Valley Road and the Old Glenn Highway. This would allow more cars to proceed through the intersection during a given time period.

The second improvement would be to allow two lanes of "through traffic" on the Old Glenn Highway to cross the intersection instead of the present one lane. The two lanes would extend to the overpass where the right lane would merge left into one lane for entrance onto the freeway. Eagle River Road should also be improved to allow two left turn lanes onto the Old Glenn Highway. These improvements could be done fairly inexpensively as no major changes to the roads or bridge are required.

The third improvement would be to build a second entrance ramp onto the freeway. The second entrance would be built from the left end of the overpass diagonally to the freeway. With this improvement, the two lanes of traffic could be extended across the overpass without merging. The left lane of traffic would turn left to gain access to the freeway while right lane traffic would turn right for freeway access.

Better Access to the New Glenn Highway:

A third traffic circulation concern of Eagle River area residents is the need for better access to the New Glenn Highway. Several possible solutions have been proposed.



One alternative would require the construction of a new interchange mid-way between the Eagle River and North Eagle River interchanges (in the vicinity of Farm Avenue). This solution would require the construction of a major arterial road from the New Glenn Highway to Eagle River Loop Road and the Old Glenn Highway. The construction of the interchange would give the business core better access to the freeway but would require a rerouting of Business Boulevard. Residential areas north of Farm Avenue could be negatively impacted by the project. Federal Highway regulations and permits may affect the feasibility of this alternative.

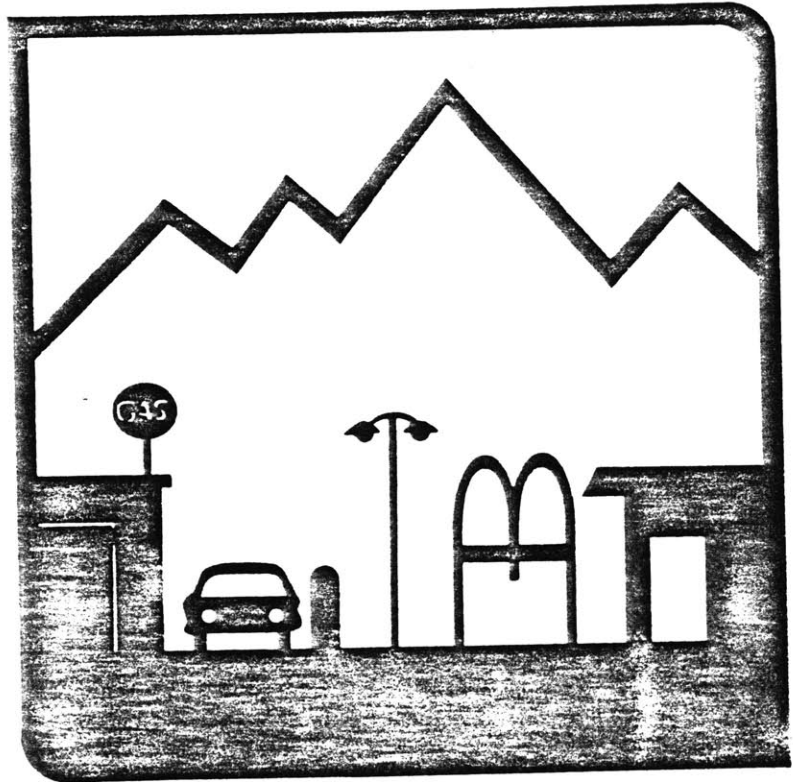
A second alternative would be to build a road across Eagle River Valley, bridging Eagle River to Hiland Road. This solution would give south Eagle River and Eagle River Valley residents access to the under-utilized Hiland Road interchange on the New Glenn Highway.

A third possible solution to the access problem would be to improve the existing Eagle River interchanges. The Eagle River interchange could be improved to handle more traffic (as outlined on Page _____) and the North Eagle River access could be finished into a more efficient, limited-access interchange.

The third alternative is estimated to be the most inexpensive of the alternatives. According to ADOT officials, the bridge and road across the valley would be somewhat less expensive than a new interchange.

Recommendation:

To solve the problem of access to the New Glenn Highway, further study is needed. Future population growth and travel patterns, land use impacts, environmental concerns, economic costs, and safety all need to be considered before a course of action is taken. A study should involve the Alaska State Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, the Municipality and citizens of Eagle River.



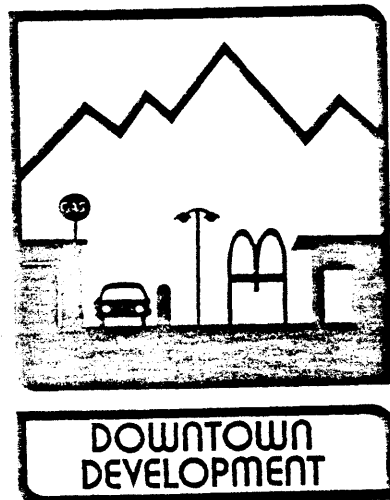
**DOWNTOWN
DEVELOPMENT**

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

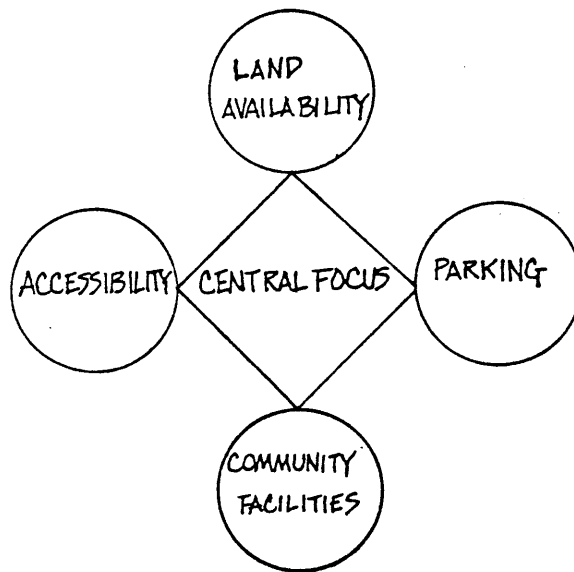
Participants in the workshops raised several downtown development issues. Among the major concerns of Eagle River area citizens are the desire for a central focus in Eagle River, the wish for an aesthetically pleasing downtown, and the need for a community review of major new development.

Central Focus: The land use concept presented in the 1979 Comprehensive Plan envisioned the downtown Eagle River area as the employment and retail center of the Eagle River-Chugiak-Eklutna region. Within the downtown area, a strong commercial office and retail core was planned and has begun to develop. Citizens at the workshops expressed a desire to see this strong commercial core continue to develop.

At present, the zoning in the downtown area is conducive to the development of a centrally focused downtown area. Most of the undeveloped land in the area is zoned B-3 which allows retail commercial development. So there is room in the heart of Eagle River for commercial expansion.



Availability of land, however, is not the only criterion used to select the location of commercial development. Accessibility, available parking, and the number of people drawn to an area are also important considerations. In Eagle River, accessibility will be good after the Old Glenn Highway improvements are completed and parking is adequate, though not always efficiently designed. And presently, many people in the Eagle River-Chugiak region are drawn to the Eagle River business area because of the existing shopping facilities. In the future, however, as the Eagle River-Chugiak region grows, there will be pressure for additional commercial development at other locations. If downtown Eagle River is to continue as the employment and commercial center of the area, people must be drawn to the central business district. An important step that can be taken to ensure that people are drawn to downtown Eagle River is to locate major community facilities in the downtown area. Community facilities like a library, a transit center, Municipal offices, and a community center draw people at a regional, rather than just a neighborhood level. Some facilities like a library and community center attract people to the business district in the evening. People drawn to Eagle River to use community facilities will also take advantage of the downtown's businesses.



**Elements of a Centrally Focused
Downtown**

Recommendation:

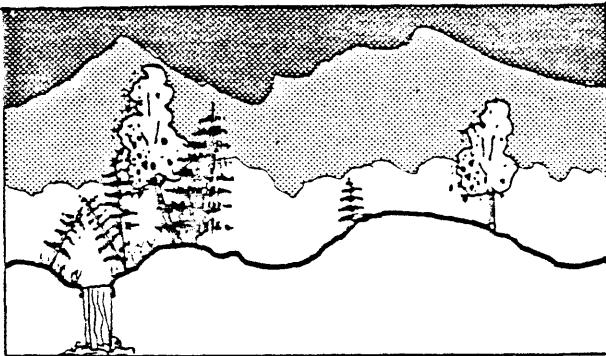
The Municipality should acquire land in downtown Eagle River for community facilities. Land for a transit center should be a first priority. Also, land for future Municipal facilities such as a community center and an expanded library should be acquired.

The gravel extraction site on Coronado Avenue is the recommended location for a transit center and other future public facilities. The Post Office property and adjacent lot to the east would also be a good location for future Municipal facilities.

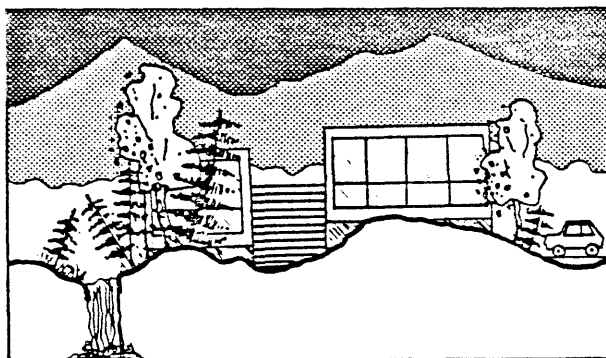
Aesthetics: An aesthetically-pleasing downtown will attract shoppers and businesses to the downtown area. At the public workshops, Eagle River residents expressed a desire for appropriate siting design of new development, for design and signage guidelines, and for limited strip development in the downtown area.

Good siting of new development would make downtown Eagle River more attractive by preserving existing trees and natural vegetation, by leaving topsoil intact, by improving traffic circulation within the development, and by "fitting" buildings to the lay of the land. To encourage good siting of new development in Eagle River, a handbook for developers that illustrates good siting practices should be produced.

Good Siting Techniques



1. EXISTING TOPOGRAPHY, TOPSOIL, AND VEGETATION SHOULD BE LEFT INTACT, IF POSSIBLE.



2. BUILDING SHOULD "FIT" THE LAY OF THE LAND. PARKING SHOULD BE SCREENED.

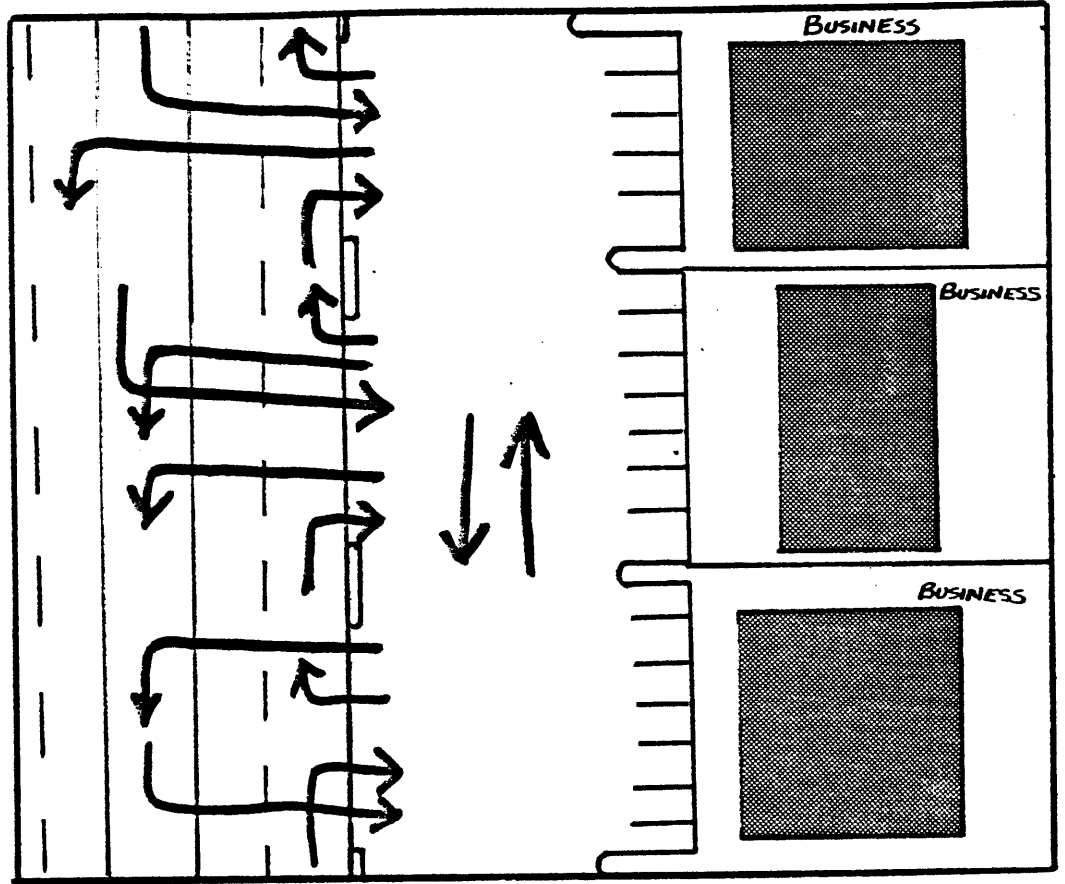
Design and signage guidelines that would be used voluntarily throughout the central business district would make downtown Eagle River attractive. Design guidelines could outline an agreed-upon architectural theme or could discuss elements of good design which make developments more pleasing. An agreed-upon architectural theme, (Western-style, for example) used throughout the downtown Eagle River would give the downtown area a uniformity and continuity that it presently lacks. The use of different elements of good design (like quality materials, good siting and well-designed buildings) would also add a uniformity and "sense of place" to downtown Eagle River. Signage guidelines could also relate to a theme or identify components of good design. Design and signage guidelines would be used in the design of new developments and the renovations of existing structures.

Limiting strip commercial development to downtown Eagle River would make the downtown area more centrally focused and pleasing. To prevent expansion of strip commercial development, the B-3 zone should not be extended north beyond the North Eagle River interchange, or east along Eagle River Loop Road.

Existing strip commercial development can be made more attractive by encouraging strip businesses to share curb cuts and parking facilities. Shared curb cuts reduce points where traffic can turn onto the roadway, decreasing traffic hazards. More parking spaces are created with the space saved from fewer curb cuts. Landscaping along the roadway is also more feasible when the number of curb cuts is reduced.

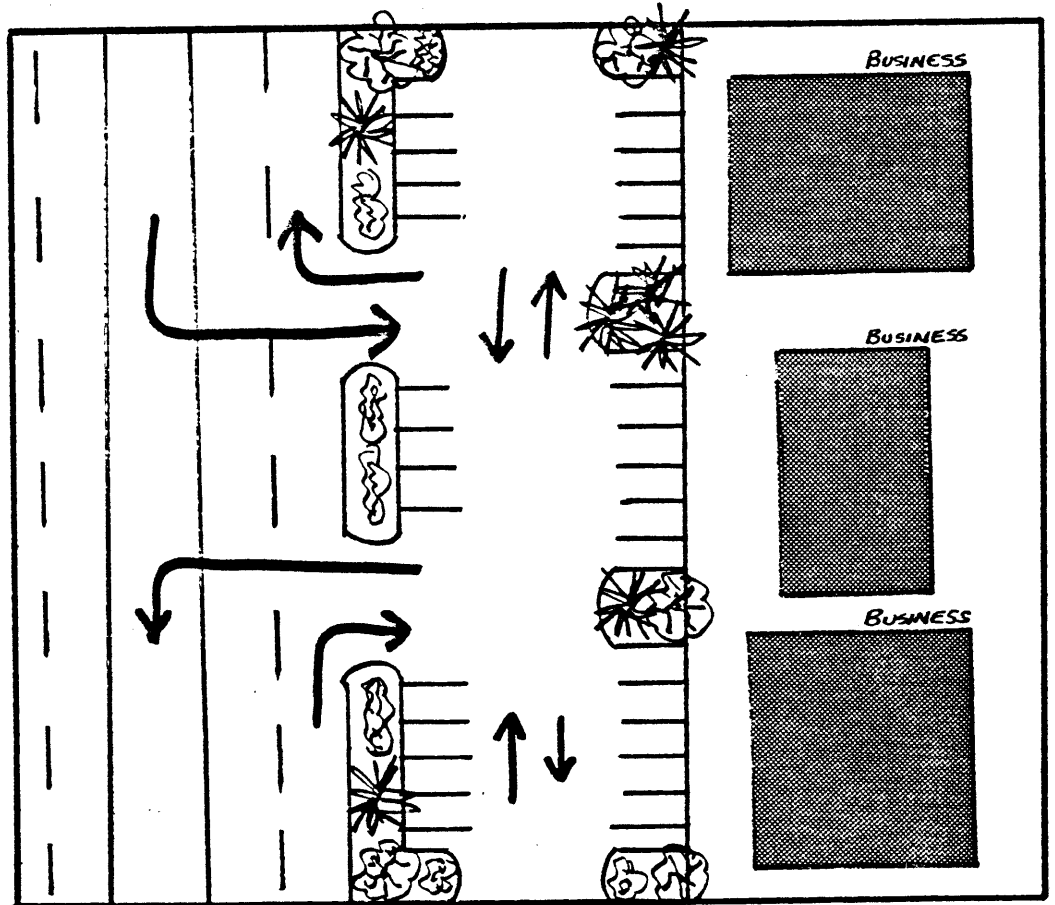
Unrestricted
Curb Cuts

- More Turning Traffic
- Less Parking
- More Unsightly



Shared
Curb Cuts

- Less Turning Traffic
- More Parking
- More Landscaping Potential



Alaska law prohibits the State Department of Transportation from mandating shared curb cuts among businesses. Business owners, however, can voluntarily agree to share curb cuts onto a roadway. In Eagle River, strip commercial businesses can limit the number of curb cuts onto the Old Glenn Highway now as the roadway is being improved. Business owners interested in sharing curb cuts onto the Old Glenn Highway should contact the Highways Design and Construction Division of the Alaska Department of Transportation.

Recommendations:

Several recommendations to encourage the development of a more attractive downtown area can be made.

- 1) A handbook that outlines good siting techniques for developers should be written;
- 2) A set of design and signage guidelines that could be used voluntarily in the Eagle River business district should be produced with Municipal Assistance;
- 3) Copies of the handbook and guidelines should be distributed to developers and business owners by the Municipality and community organizations like the Chamber of Commerce and the Community Councils;
- 4) The B-3 zone should not be extended along the Old Glenn Highway north of the North Eagle River Access Road, or east along Eagle River Loop Road; and
- 5) The sharing of curb cuts and parking facilities should be encouraged among strip commercial businesses.

Community Review of New Development:

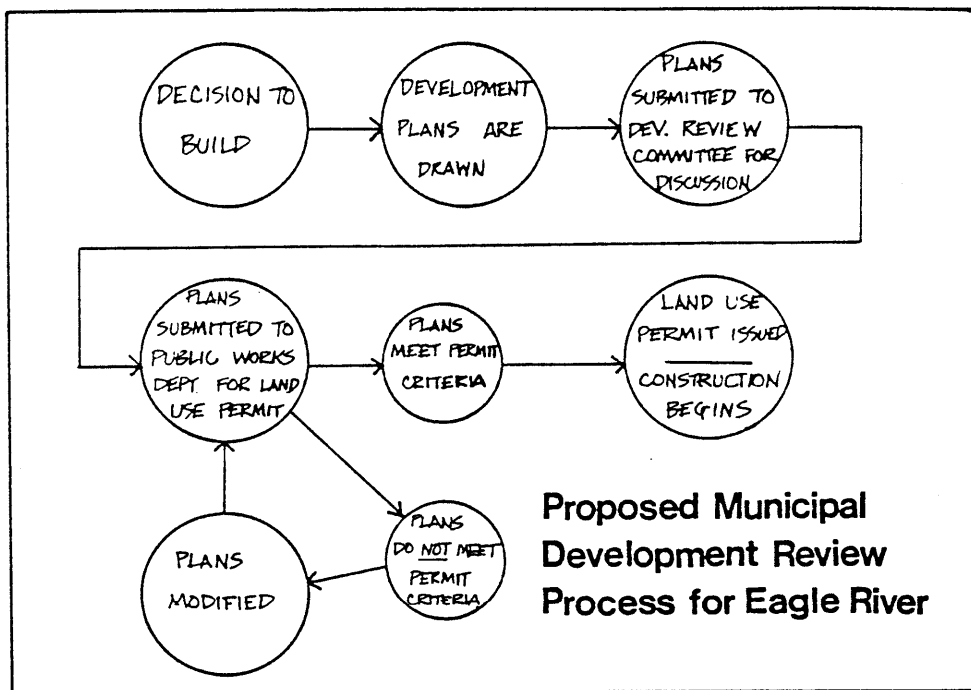
New development is occurring in the Eagle River area at an unprecedented rate. In the last year, over 200 housing units and several businesses have been built. Eagle River residents know that the community is changing and many are alarmed that they have no voice in the change. Municipal land use regulations address only some of the concerns of Eagle River citizens. Some development problems apply only to Eagle River and must be brought to the attention of developers by area residents. At present, Eagle River residents have little chance to influence the direction of development in the community. To give Eagle River residents a chance to voice their opinions and ideas on major developments in the community, a public meeting with the developer should be required.

Recommendation:

Establish a process in which major land developments in Eagle River are reviewed by the public. The following process is proposed.

Developers of residential developments of over 10 units and commercial and industrial developments of over 5,000 square feet in floor area should be required to hold a meeting with the general public to discuss development plans. The meeting would be held early in the development process (before the Land Use Permit is granted) and would require the developer to address questions regarding the proposed development's impact on nearby neighborhoods, traffic, schools, aesthetics, vegetation, etc. The meeting would also allow the public to query the developer and/or offer suggestions. This process would apply to all major developments in downtown Eagle River and adjacent areas with precise boundaries of jurisdiction determined by the Municipal Assembly. The meeting would require a public notice in the local paper.

A Development Review Committee would chair the meeting and acknowledge to the Zoning Enforcement Office that the meeting has been held. The Development Review Committee would be composed of citizens from downtown Eagle River and nearby areas. An example of the Development Review Committee membership could be 1 design professional from the Eagle River area, 1 member from the Eagle River Community Council, 1 member from the Eagle River Chamber of Commerce, and 2 members from nearby areas (perhaps Community Council members from Eagle River Valley and Chugiak).



Public Reaction to this proposal:

At the public meeting when this recommendation was presented, there were strong arguments for and against the proposal.

Opponents of the proposal felt that the recommendation would be burdensome to developers because it would impose additional "red tape" to the development process. Some opponents felt that the public should not have any input into the development of real estate unless "they were going to help pay for the development." The proposal was also opposed because some felt it would be ineffectual since no development standards would be required. The recommendation would only be a method to appease the public.

Proponents of the recommendation felt that the required meeting with developers would give the Eagle River public an opportunity to ask developers questions about their developments and would keep the public aware of major development projects within the community. Most proponents stated that the proposal would be effective. They felt that developers would be sensitive to community concerns and would modify their plans to make them more acceptable in the community. Some proponents supported a required meeting with developers because they felt the public should have input into major community development decisions.

An Alternative: A voluntary alternative is also possible. The alternative would be to establish a Development Review Commission to which developers could voluntarily turn for help on design and siting issues. The Commission could be made up of Eagle River design professionals as well as representatives from the Community Councils and business community. The Commission, using design and siting guidelines developed for Eagle River, could advise developers on how to better design and site their developments in Eagle River.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of this study are divided into three categories - Capital Improvements, Land Management, and Municipal Actions. The capital improvement recommendations identify and give a priority to needed public improvements in downtown Eagle River. The land management recommendations outline a definite course to be followed by the Municipality in decisions affecting development in downtown Eagle River. The Municipal Action recommendations are a list of "tasks" that the Municipality should complete in Eagle River.

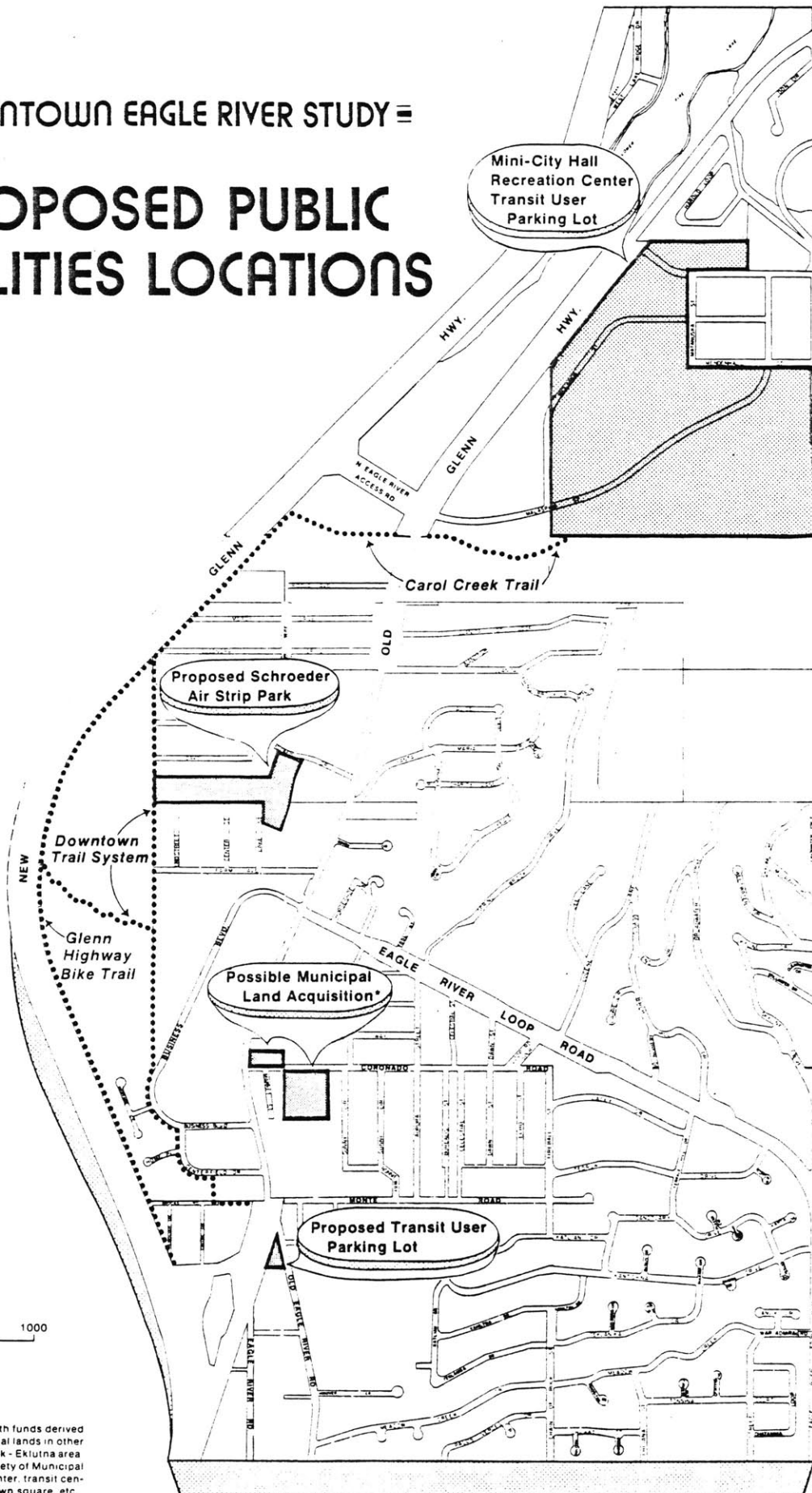
Capital Improvement:

- 1) The Schroeder Air Strip and adjacent ponds should be acquired and developed as a neighborhood park to serve downtown Eagle River. Acquisition and development funds for this project should be included in the Municipal Capital Improvement Budget as funds become available.
- 2) Sections of the downtown trail system that cannot be acquired through the platting process (AMC 21.80.135) should be purchased within the next 5 years. Acquisition and development funds should be sought from the Capital Improvement Program budget.
- 3) The mini-City Hall center should be built at the proposed Recreation Center site during the summer of 1982. The Recreation Center and mini-City Hall parking lots should be used as commuter parking for Anchorage-bound transit users. The adequacy of the facility and its location should be re-evaluated in 1985. If the facility and/or location are not adequate, a downtown site should be reconsidered.
- 4) The Municipality should acquire property in downtown Eagle River for future Municipal use with funds obtained from the sale of "surplus" Municipal lands. The gravel extraction site behind the North Slope Restaurant and the present Post Office lot and adjacent lot to the east would be good sites for future Municipal facilities that might require downtown locations.
- 5) Commuter park-and-ride facilities should be built on the state-owned property north of the Eagle River Elementary School if traffic engineering studies show that the site is adequate.

- 6) If the gravel pit property cannot be acquired with funds from the sale of "surplus" Municipal Lands, a smaller site for the transit center should be acquired at another downtown location.

≡ DOWNTOWN EAGLE RIVER STUDY ≡

PROPOSED PUBLIC FACILITIES LOCATIONS



*This land could be acquired with funds derived from the sale of surplus Municipal lands in other parts of the Eagle River - Chugiak - Eklutna area. The land could be used for a variety of Municipal uses including a community center, transit center, branch library, town hall, town square, etc.

Land Management:

- 1) a. The Municipality should require developers of residential developments of over 10 units and commercial and industrial developments of over 5,000 square feet in Eagle River to hold public meetings to discuss their development plans before Land Use Permits for the developments are granted. The meetings would be chaired by a development review committee made up of 5 Eagle River area residents.
- b. Because of controversy regarding the above recommendation at the final public meeting, a compromise solution is also proposed: A development review committee would provide advice to developers on how to better design and site their developments in Eagle River. Developers would meet with the committee voluntarily. The committee would base their advice upon a set of design and siting guidelines developed specifically for Eagle River.
- 2) Community facilities that would draw people into downtown Eagle River should be centrally located rather than on the periphery of the business district. The location of new community facilities should take into account the residents' desire to see a centrally focused downtown area.
- 3) To retard future strip commercial development, the B-3 zone should not be expanded along the Old Glenn Highway beyond the North Eagle River Access onto the New Glenn Highway. Requests for rezones of property to B-3 along Eagle River Valley Road and Eagle River Loop Road should be granted only in accordance with the 1979 Comprehensive Plan.
- 4) Strip commercial businesses should be encouraged to share parking facilities and curb cuts. Shared parking and curb cuts increase the amount of parking available to businesses and reduce the number of traffic turning points along the road.

Municipal Actions:

- 1) The Municipal AMATS Committee should set up a meeting with the State Department of Transportation and the Eagle River area public to discuss traffic management and future highway projects in the Eagle River area.

- 2) The three-step improvement program for the Eagle River Valley Road/Old Glenn Highway intersection and Eagle River interchange should be reviewed by the AMATS Committee. If the program is deemed appropriate, the Committee should request that the State Department of Transportation initiate the improvement program.
- 3) A handbook that outlines good siting techniques and establishes design standards for use by the Development Review Committee should be written. Architectural design and signage guidelines should be developed with Municipal assistance and included in the handbook if Eagle River business owners and tenants are supportive.

The handbook should be distributed to the Eagle River public, developers, and the Development Review Committee.

- 4) The downtown trail system should be included in the Eagle River-Chugiak-Eklutna Parks and Open Space Plan and adopted as an amendment to the Areawide Trails Plan. Following its adoption, trail easements may be obtained by the Platting Authority pursuant to Anchorage Municipal Code 21.80.135 on previously unplatted lands.
- 5) The Municipality should initiate a vacation and replat of the unused road right-of-way on the proposed Carol Creek trail to dedicate the road right-of-way for park purposes.
- 6) Further study is needed to determine the feasibility and advisability of providing additional access to the New Glenn Highway from downtown Eagle River. Population growth and travel patterns as well as the land use impacts, environmental concerns, costs and safety of each access alternative should be addressed in the evaluation.

APPENDIX 1

PROCESS

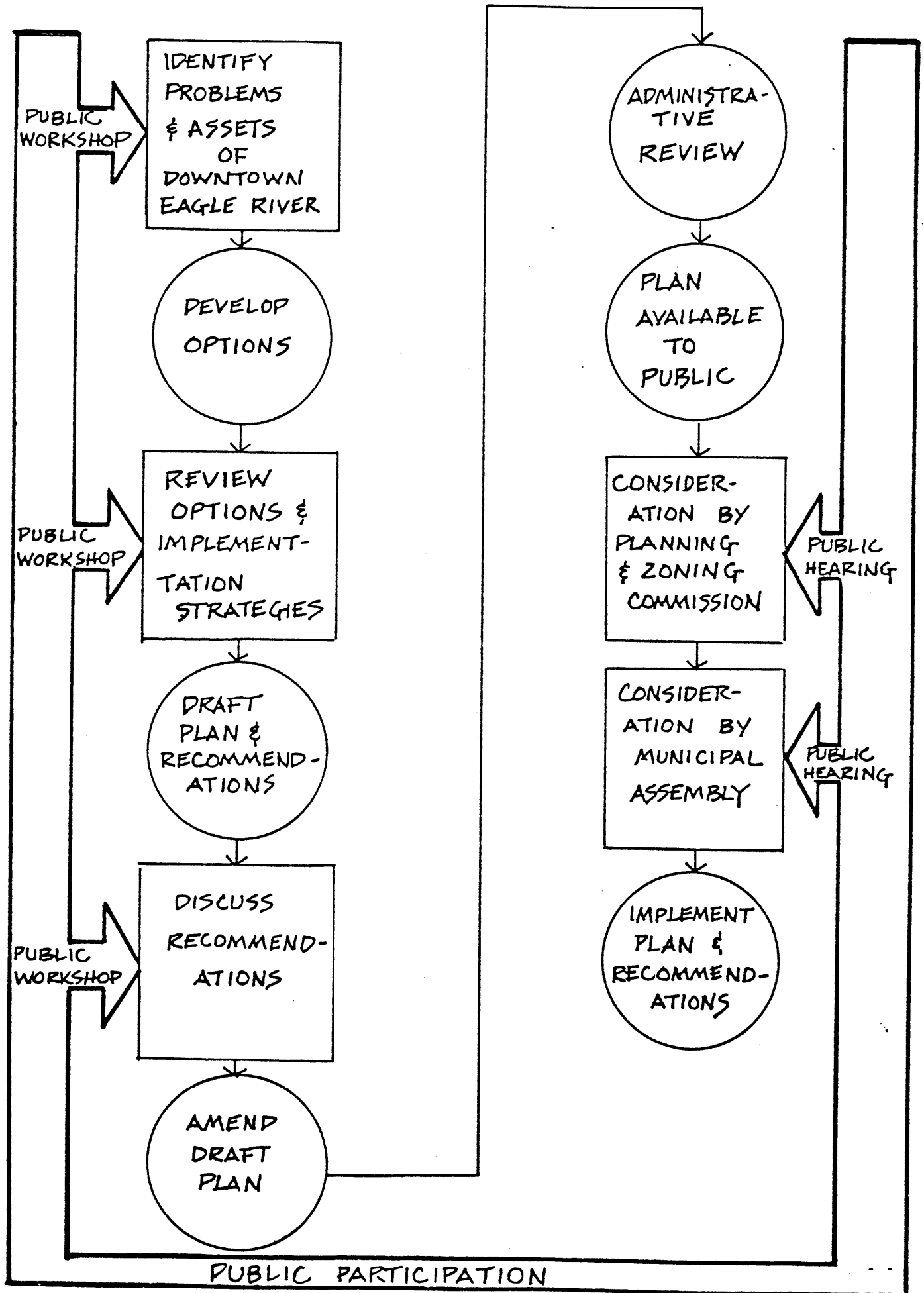
The Downtown Eagle River Plan was developed during a three-step public participation process. During the course of two months, three public workshops were held with Eagle River area citizens.

The purpose of the first workshop was to identify what the community perceived as the assets and major problems of downtown Eagle River. The structure of the workshop is outlined below:

- 1) Citizens in attendance formed ad hoc groups of two to three people. Each group was given a map (1" = 200' scale) of the downtown Eagle River area and asked to list or point out on the map the 5 best things about downtown Eagle River.
- 2) Each group was asked to list or point out on the map the 5 biggest problems in the downtown area.
- 3) In a round-robin session, a "group" list of problems was compiled from the participants.
- 4) Each group was then asked to choose 5 problems and/or assets and talk about how each could be improved. Also, each group was asked to think about who would be responsible for the improvements.
- 5) Then, as a large group, the improvements were discussed.
- 6) After both problems and improvements had been discussed, the large group was asked to vote on the issues with which they had the most concern.

Four themes emerged from the first workshop - a need for community facilities, a lack of parks and open space, a concern over downtown development and aesthetics, and a need for good transportation facilities. The Planning staff examined the problems associated with these themes and drew up options to resolve the problems. At the second workshop, the options to deal with the problems and a set of strategies to implement the various options were presented to the public. The options and implementation strategies varied in the amount and type of regulation, funding, and personnel needed. The people attending the 2nd workshop were asked to decide what options were appropriate and what implementation strategies were most feasible. At the end of the workshop, the participants were asked to indicate what options and implementation strategies should be developed further.

The Process



The public input from the second workshop was used to formulate a set of recommendations for downtown Eagle River. The recommendations included Capital Improvement Requests, Land Management Recommendations and Municipal Actions. These recommendations were presented for public review at the third public workshop. At this third meeting, the recommendations were discussed and modifications were made. After the third meeting, the draft plan was developed for consideration and action by the Planning and Zoning Commission and Municipal Assembly.

CHAPTER 2: FINAL REPORT TO THE CITIZENS OF EAGLE RIVER ON THE
DOWNTOWN EAGLE RIVER STUDY

THE PLAN

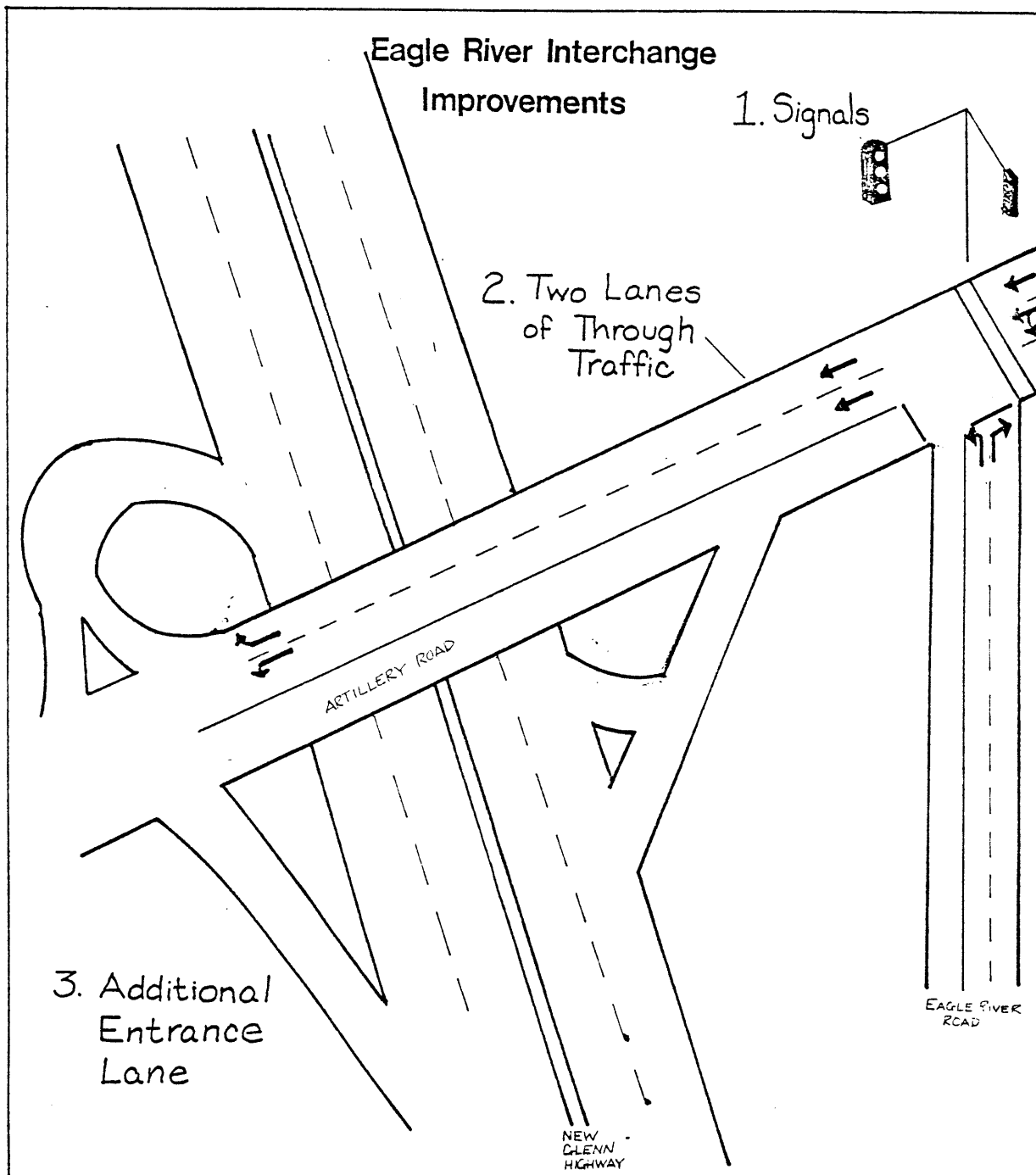
What will downtown Eagle River be like in twenty years? Will it be a suburb of shopping malls? Will it be a commercial highway strip? Or, will it be a quaint town of wooded parks and small-scale buildings? Most Eagle River residents appear to want downtown Eagle River to become a bit of all three. They want the convenience of a shopping mall suburb. They want the accessibility of a commercial highway strip. And, they want the small town atmosphere of a community with parks and well-designed, low density development.

A land use plan for downtown Eagle River was developed in the 1979 Eagle River-Chugiak-Eklutna Comprehensive Plan. This plan outlined a land use pattern for new development in the downtown area. New development in Eagle River has generally conformed to the land use plan. But as development has occurred, new development concerns have arisen. The 1982 Downtown Eagle River Study focuses on these new concerns and proposes a set of actions the Municipality can take to deal with them. The concerns addressed in the 1982 plan are ones Eagle River residents have singled out in public meetings as most important. Their concerns center around making Eagle River:

- 1) an accessible place;
- 2) a convenient place; and
- 3) a place with parks and well-designed, low density development.

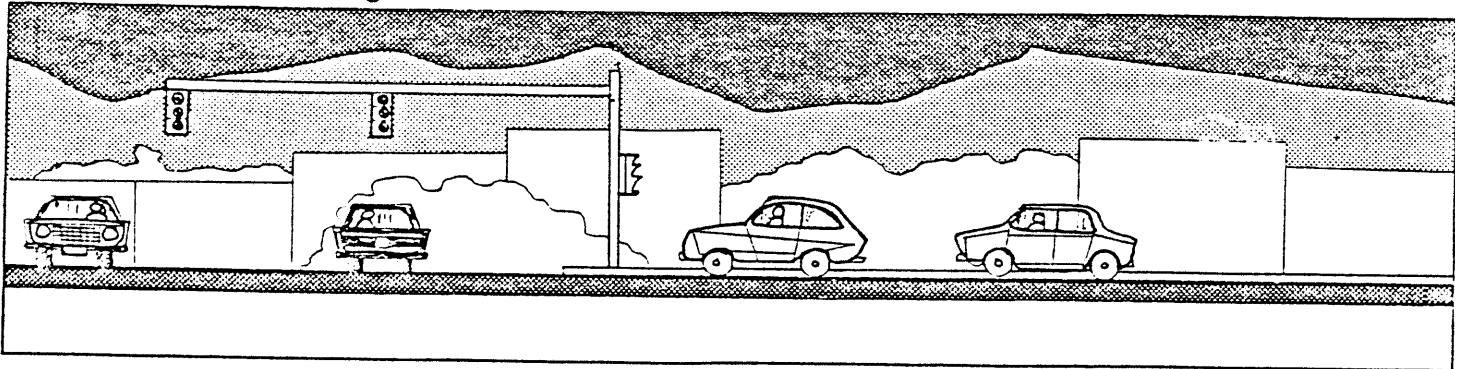
Accessibility:

The Downtown Eagle River Study offers several suggestions to improve automobile accessibility in downtown Eagle River. One recommendation suggests an improvement program to increase the flow of traffic through the Old Glenn Highway/Eagle River Road intersection onto the New Glenn Highway.



Another recommendation requests the Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Study Committee to set up meetings with the Alaska Department of Transportation to discuss the installation of traffic signals along the Old Glenn Highway.

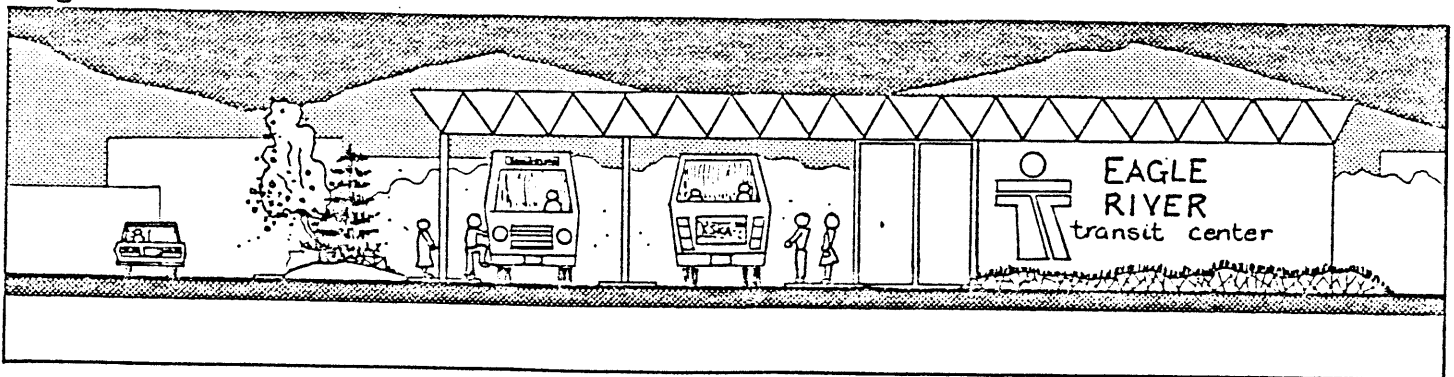
Traffic Signals along the Old Glenn



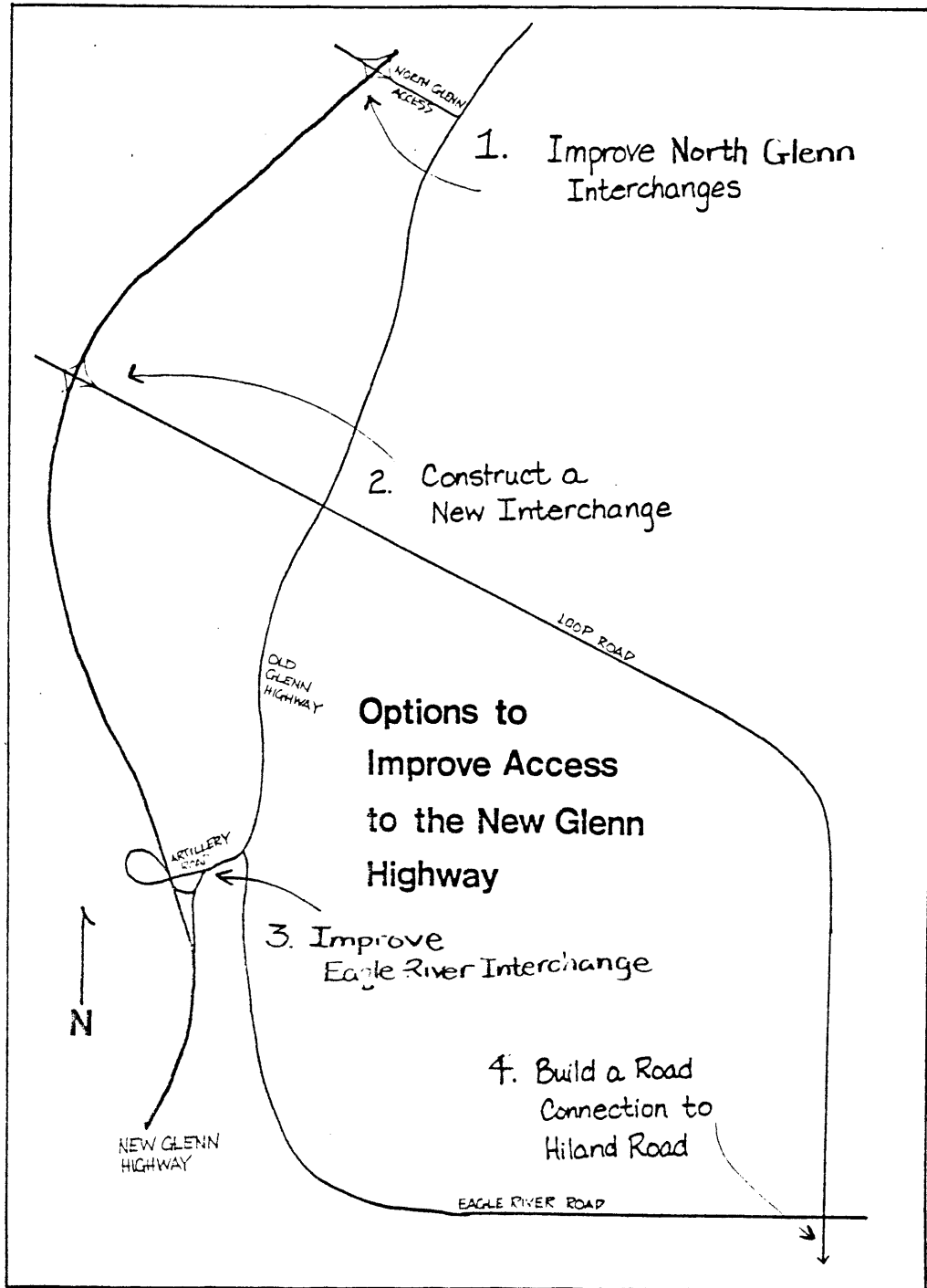
The plan also suggests that the feasibility of providing additional access to the downtown area from the New Glenn Highway be studied. (See diagram on following page).

Recommendations to improve transit accessibility in downtown Eagle River are also proposed. To accommodate transit users in downtown Eagle River, a transit center that would act as a transfer point, waiting area, and information booth is recommended.

Eagle River Transit Center

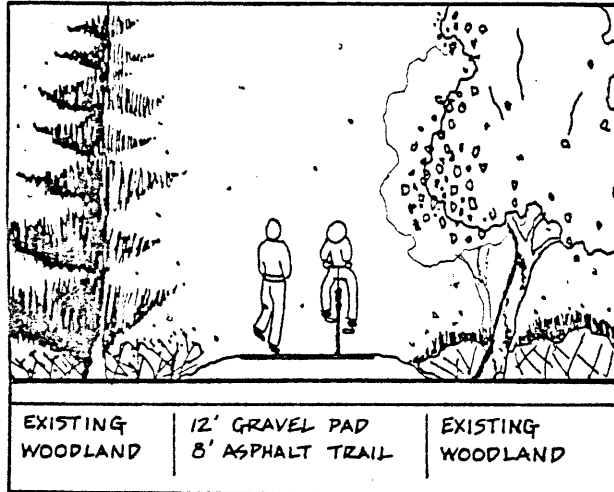


Another recommendation proposes the construction of Park-and-Ride lots on the periphery of downtown Eagle River to provide parking space for Anchorage-bound commuters.



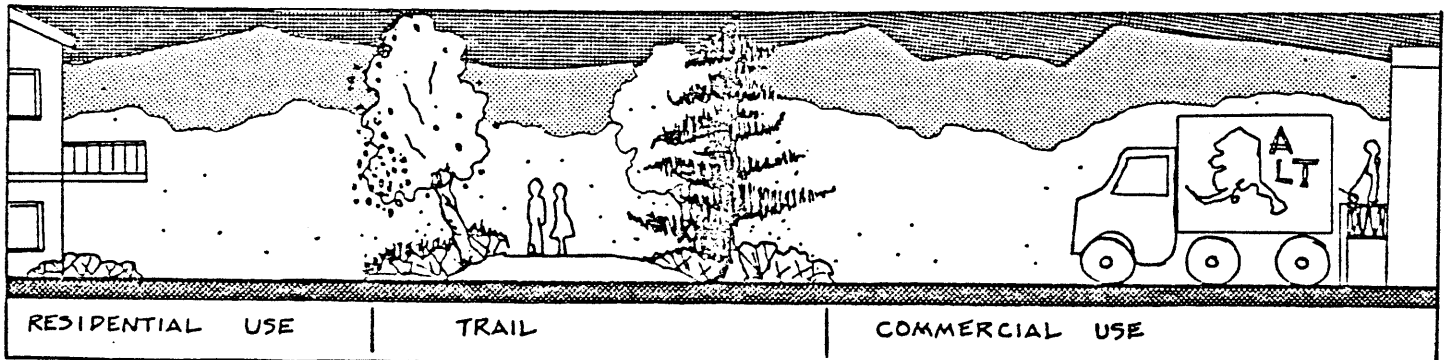
The plan also provides recommendations to increase the accessibility of the the downtown area for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Trail Section



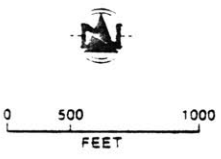
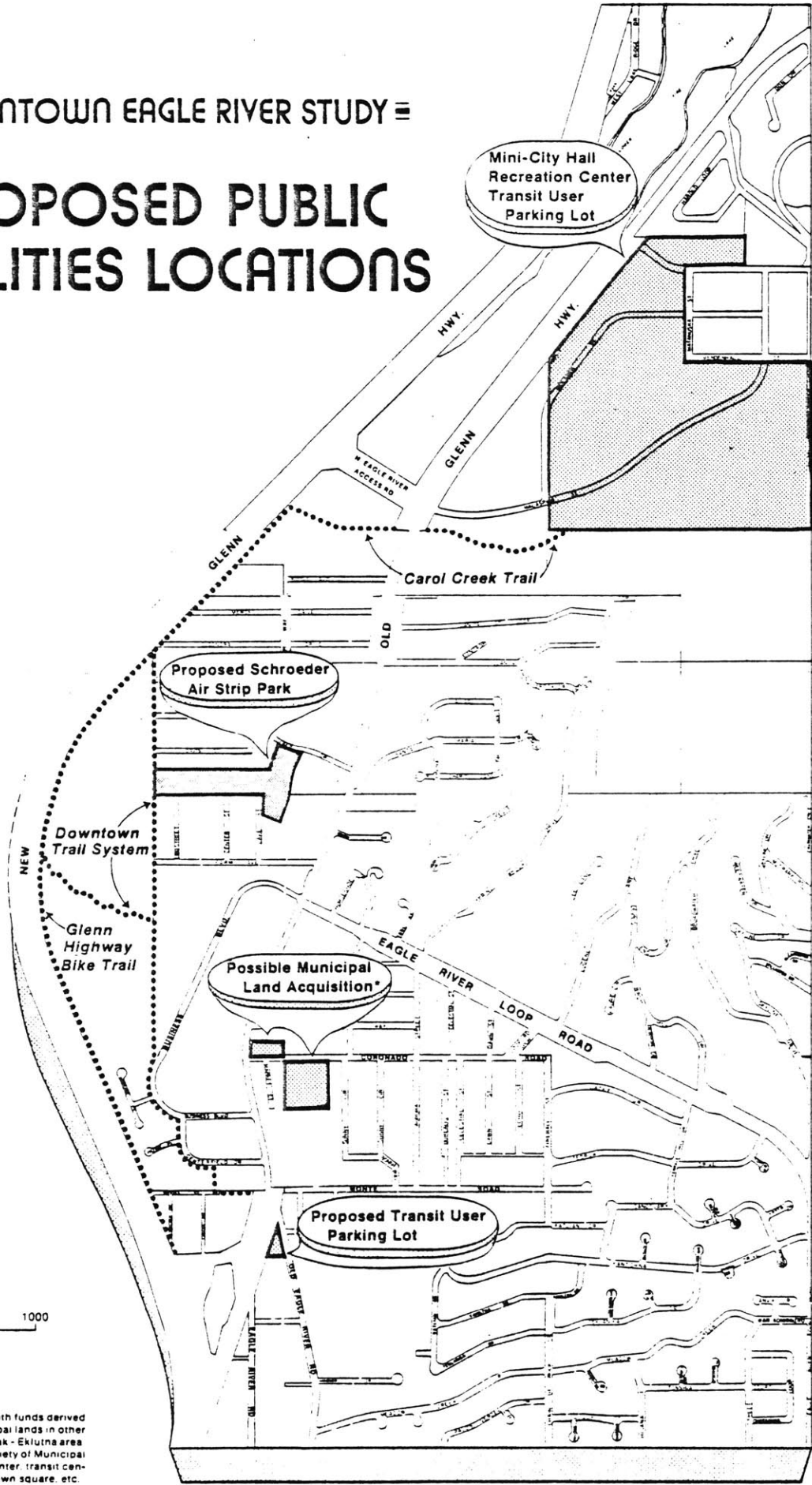
The construction of a downtown trail system that would connect the proposed Recreation Center on the north end of downtown to the Eagle River Elementary School is recommended in the plan. The trail system would not only increase bicycle and pedestrian access to downtown but would also act as a buffer area between residential and commercial land uses.

Downtown Trail as a Buffer Zone



≡ DOWNTOWN EAGLE RIVER STUDY ≡

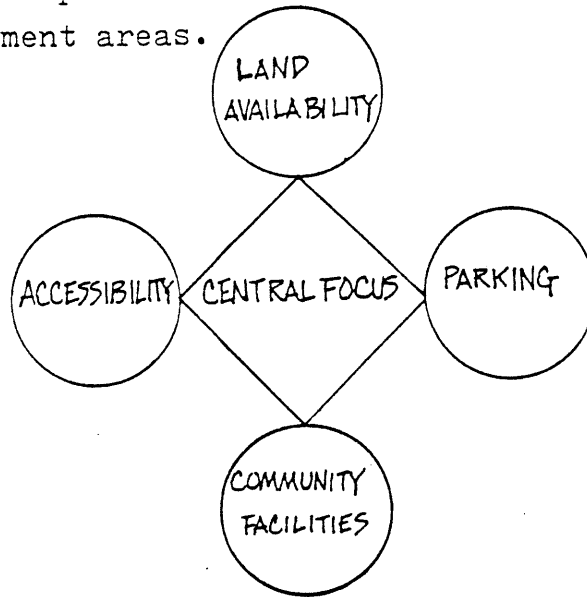
PROPOSED PUBLIC FACILITIES LOCATIONS



*This land could be acquired with funds derived from the sale of surplus Municipal lands in other parts of the Eagle River - Chugiak - Eklutna area. The land could be used for a variety of Municipal uses including a community center, transit center, branch library, town hall, town square, etc.

Convenience:

A shopping mall is convenient because "everything" is under one roof. A downtown is convenient when "everything" is clustered into a central area. The Downtown Eagle River Study provides several recommendations to encourage the development of a clustered, centrally focused downtown area. One recommendation proposes that future major community facilities such as a library, a community center, and a transit center be located in the center of downtown Eagle River. Downtown Eagle River will be more convenient if public facilities are located next to shopping and employment areas.

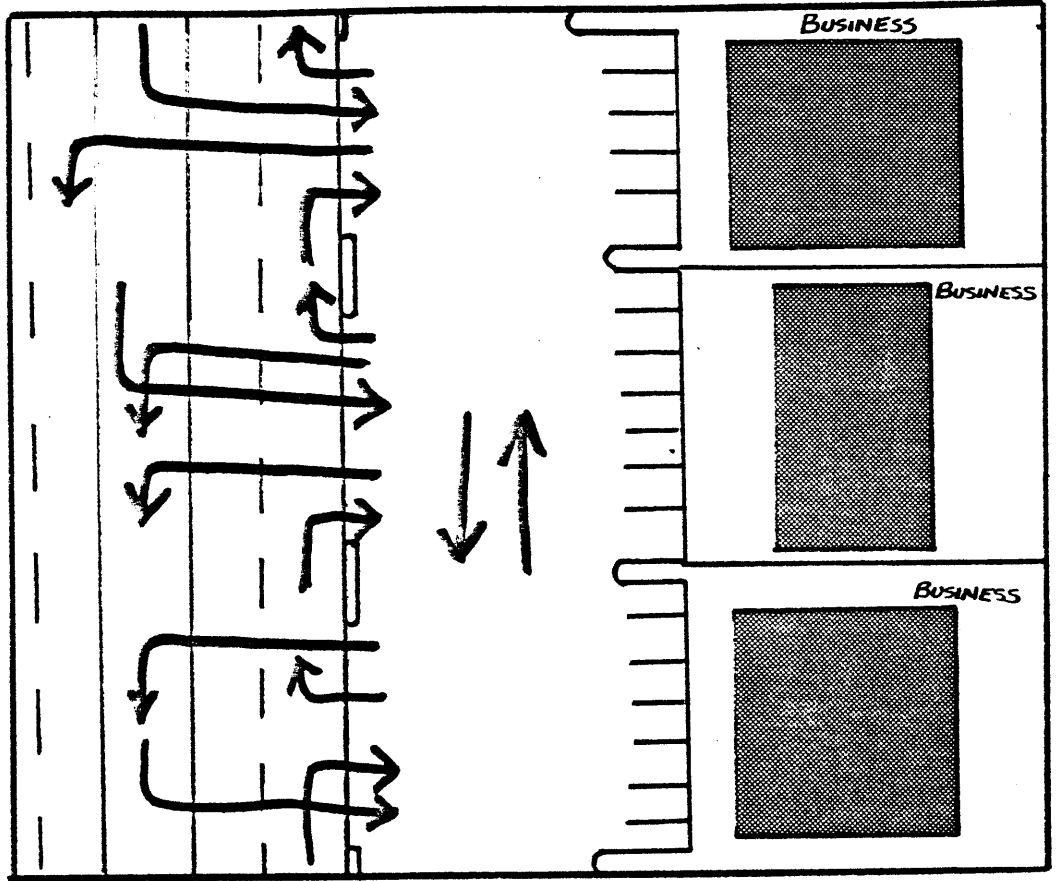


**Elements of a Centrally Focused
Downtown**

The plan also recommends that future commercial development in downtown Eagle River be limited to areas presently zoned for commercial use. By prohibiting the expansion of the commercial zone linearly along the highway, commercial businesses will cluster into a central area, making the downtown area more convenient. Another recommendation in the plan is to encourage businesses to share curb cuts onto the highway. Follow-through of this proposal would not only decrease the points along the road where traffic is turning, it would increase customer convenience by providing more room for parking. Bicycle and pedestrian access along the highway would also be improved because of fewer curb cuts.

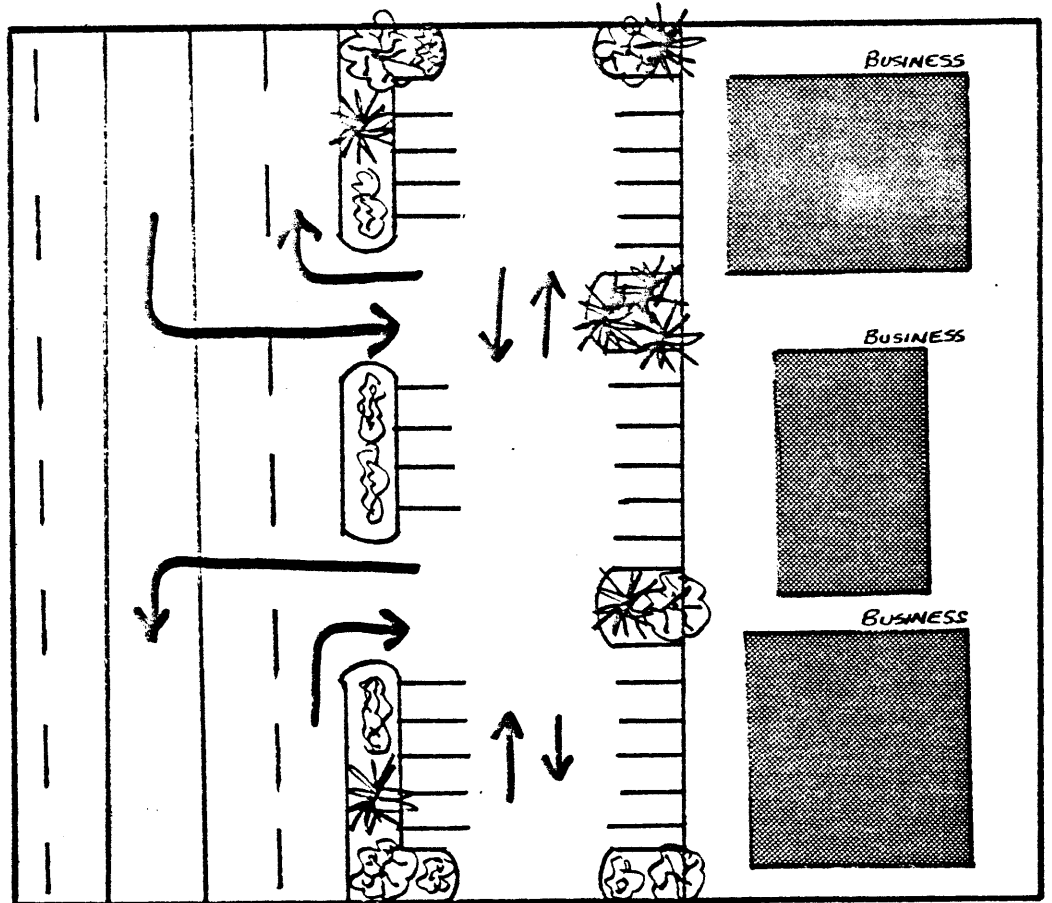
Unrestricted
Curb Cuts

- More Turning Traffic
- Less Parking
- More Unsightly



Shared
Curb Cuts

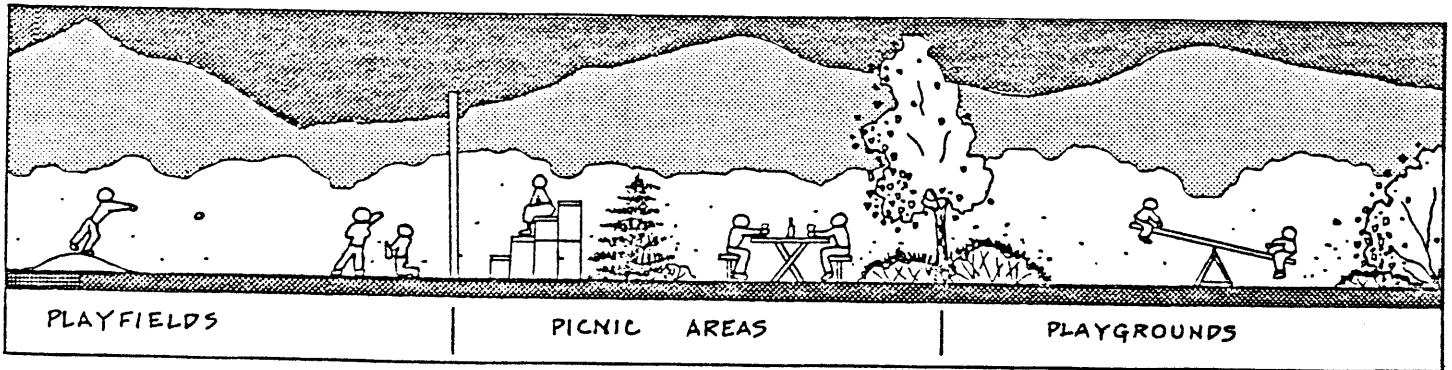
- Less Turning Traffic
- More Parking
- More Landscaping Potential



Parks and Well-Designed Development:

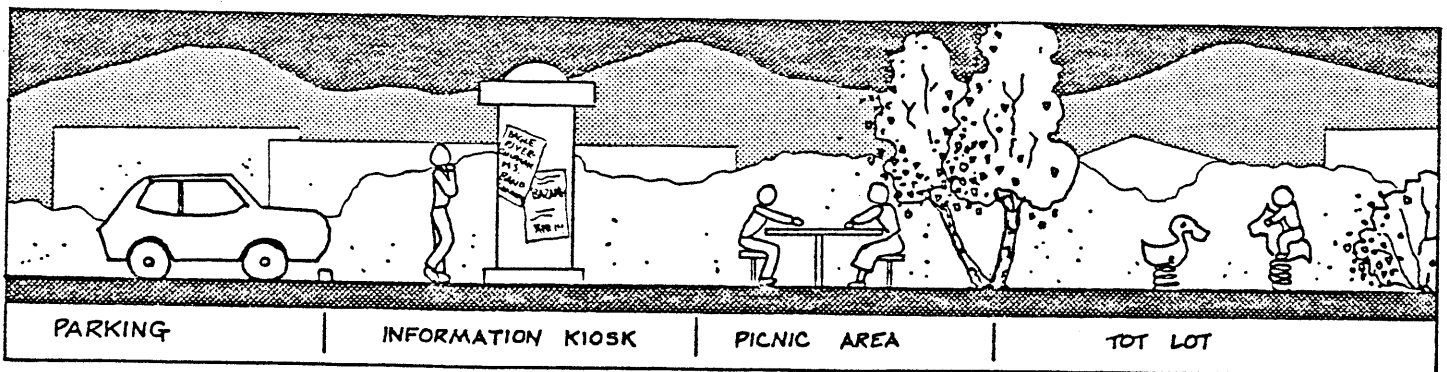
The Downtown Eagle River Study provides several recommendations to encourage the acquisition of parks and the construction of well-designed, low density development in downtown Eagle River. The study recommends that two parks be acquired in downtown Eagle River -a neighborhood park with picnic areas, playfields, and playgrounds; and a downtown park with a tot lot, seating area, and information kiosk. The rarely used Schroeder Air Strip on the edge of the downtown area has been recommended for the neighborhood park.

Neighborhood Park



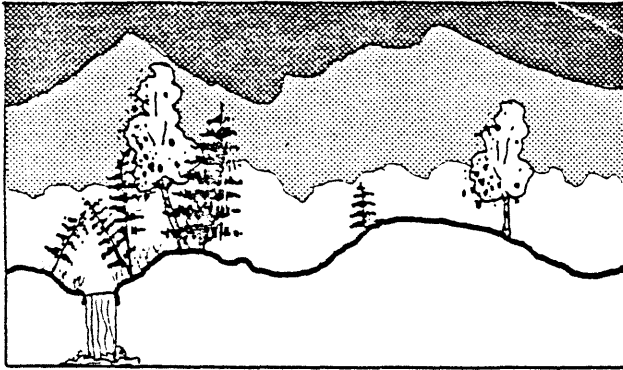
Two small lots in the downtown area have been identified as possible locations for a downtown park.

Downtown Park

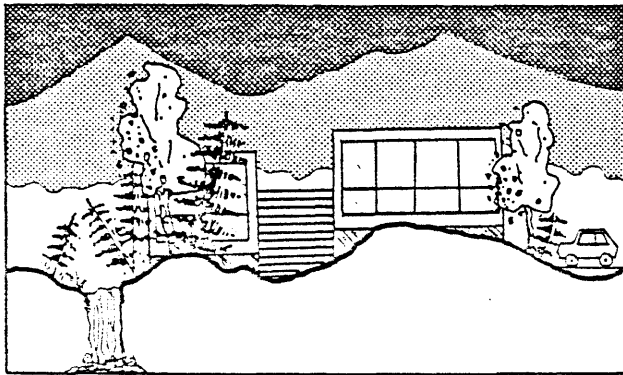


The plan also proposes methods to encourage attractive new development in downtown Eagle River. The plan suggests that a handbook for developers be written that outlines good siting techniques and design standards.

Siting Techniques • Good

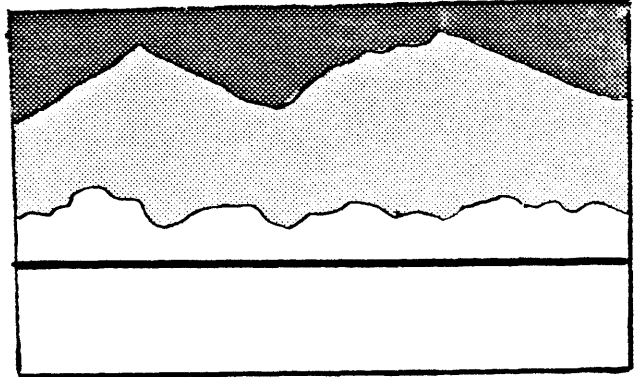


Existing topography, topsoil, and vegetation left intact.

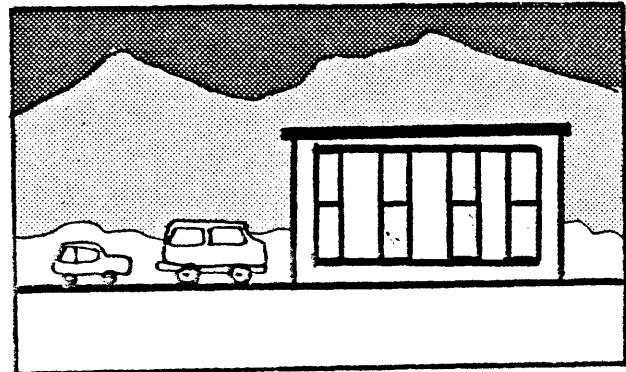


Building fits "lay of land". Parking is screened.

Siting Techniques • Bad



Existing topography, topsoil, and vegetation removed.

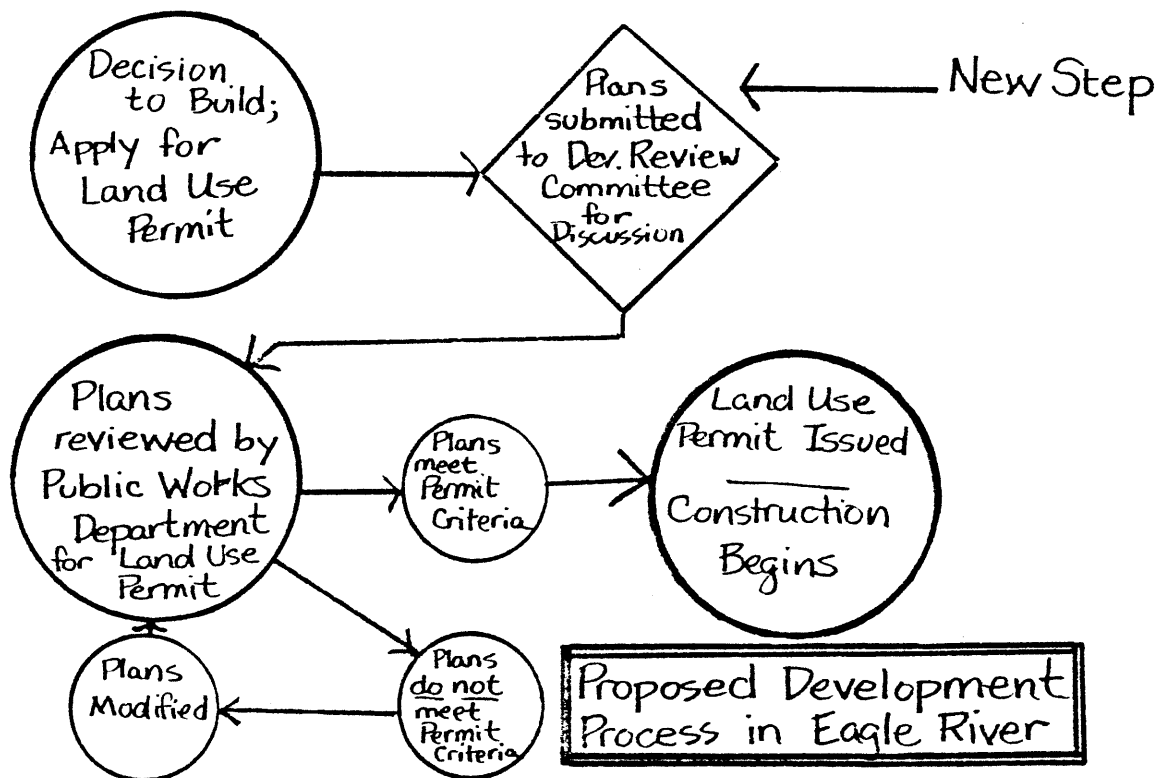


Building is not harmonious with surrounding environment. Parking is not screened.

It also suggests that local businesses, with Municipal help, develop a set of architectural design and signage guidelines for downtown Eagle River.

Development regulations like zoning district requirements and standards, and subdivision regulations are uniform throughout the Municipality. But, permitting procedures and associated siting and construction standards vary. These variances allow special development factors in certain parts of the Municipality to be considered. To ensure that residents of Eagle River have

an opportunity to consider special development factors in their community, the study recommends that developers of major development projects in Eagle River be required to hold a meeting with the public to discuss their development plans. This meeting would allow the developer to explain his plans to the community and would give residents the opportunity to ask questions about the development. The meeting would provide a forum where the developer and public could work together to bring new developments in Eagle River into harmony with the rest of the community, but would not be a decision-making forum adding a new regulatory hurdle.



In Eagle River, there is strong support and strong opposition to this proposal. A voluntary alternative is also possible. The alternative would allow developers to voluntarily meet with the public to discuss their development plans.

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in the plan can be divided into three categories -capital improvement requests, land management recommendations, and Municipal actions.

The capital improvement recommendations identify and give a priority to public facility needs in Eagle River. Generally, the recommendations were developed after site and needs analyses were completed and public priorities had been solicited. The capital improvement recommendations will help the Mayor and the Municipal Assembly determine what projects should be included in the Municipality's Six-Year Capital Improvement Program and Annual Capital Improvement Budget.

The land management recommendations in the plan provide guidelines for Municipal decisions that affect development in Eagle River. These recommendations will be used by the Mayor, the Assembly, and other Municipal officials to make decisions on development issues like zone change requests, public facility locations, subdivision reviews, and capital improvement expenditures.

The Municipal action recommendations identify specific actions the Municipality can take to make Eagle River a better place to live and work. These recommendations may identify issues that need further study, direct Municipal departments and committees to review and/or implement suggestions, and request Municipal process or procedure changes.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

After the plan is considered by the Planning and Zoning Commission and adopted by the Municipal Assembly, it becomes an official Municipal document which guides the day-to-day decisions and actions of Municipal elected officials and staff. Since the plan is a reflection of citizens' desires, Municipal elected officials and staff should follow the plan's recommendations when making Municipal decisions and taking Municipal actions.

At times, decisions are made that deviate from the recommendations in the plan (e.g., a zone change is granted that does not comply with a land use plan). Sometimes deviation from the plan is justified, sometimes it is not. If you feel that a Municipal decision is inconsistent with the plan and cannot be justified, you might question that decision. You should contact the elected official or staff person who made the decision and seek an explanation of why the decision was made. If you are not convinced that the proper decision was made, you might talk with other people in your community about the decision. If there is general agreement that the decision was not appropriate, you might organize a group to meet with the official or staff person to see if the decision can be changed.

The plan not only guides Municipal decisions, it proposes new courses of action. Sometimes Municipal elected officials and staff may fail to implement actions proposed in the plan (e.g., the Municipality fails to purchase land for a park proposed in a plan). If this happens, you might question the Municipality's inaction. As with a questionable decision, you should contact the appropriate Municipal official to seek an explanation of the failure to implement a proposed action. If you are not convinced that the lack of action is justified, you should work with other people in the community to try to get action on the unimplemented proposal.

WHEN DECISIONS ARE MADE

Capital Improvements

Annual capital improvement expenditures and project additions to the six-year Capital Improvement Program are reviewed by the Planning and Zoning Commission in June and approved by the Municipal Assembly in July. Revisions of the annual expenditure program are made in November after the bond elections.

Parks and Recreation Capital Projects-

To include park acquisition and development, bicycle trails, and greenbelt acquisition projects in the six-year Capital Improvement Program, the Eagle River area Board of Recreation Supervisors should be encouraged to endorse the projects. The list of endorsed projects will then be passed on to the Municipal Department of Parks and Recreation. The Parks Department will set priorities with all city projects and will include the high priority Eagle River projects into the Municipal Parks and Recreation Six-Year Capital Improvement Program which will be submitted to the Planning and Zoning Commission and Municipal Assembly.

If the project is of high priority and should be built within the next year, the Eagle River area Board of Recreation Supervisors should be contacted in January so their endorsements can be passed to the Parks and Recreation Department before the annual departmental Capital Improvement Budget is submitted to the Planning and Zoning Commission in June and the Municipal Assembly in July.

Other Capital Projects-

To ensure that other capital projects such as a transit center or a transit parking lot are included into the Municipal Capital Improvement Program, the Municipal departments that would be responsible for planning or operating the projects should be contacted. These departments will study the feasibility of the

projects and may included them into their six-year departmental Capital Improvement Programs, (e.g., transit center, contact the Transit Planner in the Planning Department). The appropriate department should be contacted in January to ensure that the proposed project will be considered for the forthcoming Capital Improvement Budget that is submitted to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Municipal Assembly in the summer.

Land Management

Before Municipal decisions on zoning changes, conditional use permit requests, and plat approvals are made, a public notification procedure must be followed. All property owners that own land within 500 feet or 50 parcels of the property that is being considered for platting, a rezone, or a conditional use permit must be contacted. The Community Council in the area of the property is also notified of the requested action. The Anchorage Sunday Times publishes a meeting notice of all rezonings, conditional use permit requests, and platting requests. The notice includes a legal description of the property and the name of the petitioner requesting the action. All Planning and Zoning Commission and Platting Board meetings are open to the public and allow testimony by concerned citizens. Agendas of these meetings are available at the Planning Department.

Public facilities location decisions are considered by the Planning and Zoning Commission and approved by the Municipal Assembly. The agendas of these bodies are published regularly and indicate when public facility locations will be discussed.

To keep abreast of land use decisions being made in Eagle River, watch for the meeting notices in the Times and periodically contact your Community Council. The Community Councils in the Eagle River area should request that the Municipality publish notices of meetings where Eagle River land issues will be discussed in the Eagle River Star.

Municipal Actions

Since Municipal action recommendations are of several types, Municipal action decisions are made at different times and by different people. Some decisions are made by the Municipal Assembly while others are made within the Municipal departments. To keep track of decisions on the Municipal action recommendations, you should periodically contact the Municipal Community Planning Department and your Municipal Assembly representative. They will be able to update you on the status of the various recommendations and tell you who to contact for more information. Also, you should read the agendas of the Municipal Assembly and the Planning and Zoning Commission to see if Municipal action recommendations will be a topic of discussion .

CHAPTER 3: REFLECTIONS ON MY THESIS EXPERIENCE IN ALASKA

In the following section, I will reflect upon my thesis experience in Alaska. I will discuss non-resident thesis preparation. I will outline my thoughts about planning in a transient situation. I will briefly discuss planning with extensive citizen-participation in a planning department that is technically-oriented. I will conclude with some of my impressions of planning in Alaska.

Thesis Preparation from a Distance-

Thesis preparation away from the M.I.T. campus is not highly encouraged by the Department's faculty. But, as tuition continues to increase and departmental financial aid stabilizes (or decreases), non-resident thesis preparation probably will become more common in the Department. Some students will seek thesis projects that will not only fulfill academic requirements, but will be financially rewarding as well. A major reason that I chose to prepare my thesis in Alaska was that I was paid to do the project.

I can offer students and faculty some observations on non-resident thesis preparation. Probably the most important factor to consider for non-resident thesis preparation is who is available to supervise one's work at the thesis site. In my case, a former M.I.T. student who was well-known by my thesis adviser supervised my work in Alaska. This situation was ideal. My thesis adviser knew and trusted the competence of my "on-site" supervisor. My "on-site" supervisor was familiar with the M.I.T. system and could comfortably discuss my progress with my thesis adviser. An on-site supervisor that was not known in the Department and was not familiar with the planning program at M.I.T. would have made my thesis preparation away from the Institute much more difficult.

Another consideration of off-campus thesis preparation is the type of thesis one is going to write. My thesis was a plan for a client rather than a research document. I did very little literature research. The focus and direction of my thesis was tightly controlled by a series of public meetings and restrictions from the Municipal Planning Department. There are not usually such pre-imposed controls on a research thesis. Because my thesis was structured by forces outside of my control, it was not necessary to have my thesis adviser close at hand to help determine the focus and direction of my thesis. Generally, I think a clearly defined, client-oriented plan is better for an off-campus thesis than is a general research document.

My thesis adviser, to be most useful from a distance, had to be aware of the context of my thesis. My adviser had to be knowledgeable of the community and the institutional environments in which I was working. Fortunately, my thesis adviser was able to visit the site of my thesis project and to meet some of the actors in my work environment. His familiarity with the context in which my thesis was written made thesis preparation from a distance easier. Since most off-campus theses are locational, the theses writers must be able to give their advisers and readers an accurate account of the environment in which the theses are prepared.

My one regret at doing a thesis from so far away is that my thesis adviser was unable to attend my public workshops. Since the workshops were the backbone of my thesis, his attendance would have been most helpful. Advice on how to improve the format of the workshops, how to analyze the meeting results, how to handle public conflict, etc. would have been useful.

If more students seek outside clients to sponsor their thesis projects as tuition costs rise, distance is not the only issue. Some of the same problems I encountered in Alaska likely will confront a student doing a client-oriented thesis in Boston. The issues of finding a trusted and competent "on-site" supervisor and of informing one's thesis adviser of the thesis context are relevant wherever a thesis is written.

Planning as a Transient-

My contract with the Municipality of Anchorage to conduct Eagle River Study was for four months. Since I was hired to complete a single project in a short time period, I was able to learn about planning by a transient. Initially, the transient planner is faced with the task of acquiring background knowledge that generally comes to a person after he has been in a place for some time. I had planned to spend the first several weeks of my project talking with people and doing background research to acquire the "basic" knowledge I needed. But in a situation where time is short, one would have to be able to determine beforehand what information is needed and who to speak with to get it.

The transient planner generally is never able work with a project to its completion or implementation. In my case, I prepared a product for submission to the Planning Department administrators. I was unable to present the plan to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Municipal Assembly for their review. I would not be involved in the implementation of the recommendations proposed in the plan.

As a transient planner, I was not able to continue to build my relationships with citizens in the community. Over time, by building better relations in the community, I think I would have improved my effectiveness and credibility as a planner in Eagle River. My effectiveness and credibility would have increased as my knowledge of the community improved and as I gained the trust of Eagle River citizens.

The transient planner can also be seen as an exploitive "carpetbagger" both by fellow planners and the public -especially in Alaska. Because of the state's location, many Alaskans tend to think of their problems as unique and beyond the comprehension of professionals from other states. They view transient consultants as "here today, gone tomorrow" moneygrabbers. Planning problems in Alaska

do have idiosyncracies that are worth noting. But, these differences are not so great that they cannot be overcome by a sensitive and observant planner.

As a student writing a thesis, my transient status was different than that of a normal planning consultant. I was given a great deal of freedom by the Planning Department to conduct the study as I wanted. My "on-site" supervisor was the only person in the department that gave me direction as to the kind of product the department wanted. I was a low budget transient. Perhaps because they were getting work done so cheaply, they were willing to allow more freedom and flexibility in the plan development. Had I been an expensive consultant, the picture would have been different. I also think the agency respected the fact that the Eagle River project was my thesis. They allowed me some license to conduct the study the way I wanted because the plan was an academic exercise. Eventhough I was given a great deal of freedom to conduct the Eagle River study as I wanted, it was apparent to me that I was still a student to the departmental supervisors. The department's lack of interference probably meant that the project was dispensible if it did not turn out well.

I think the public's perception of me as a transient planner was also different because I was a student preparing a thesis. On the positive side, I think the public felt more comfortable with me because they knew that I was not making lots of money. They did not feel that I was exploiting them or the Municipality with a lucrative contract. I also think they were willing to give me the benefit of the doubt during the plan's development because I was student still green behind the ears. They probably would have been much tougher on a weathered consultant. I think the public was less intimidated at the public meetings because I a student rather than a professional consultant. The citizens at the meetings were not shy about expressing their opinions.

On the negative side, the public might have had some questions about who the plan was really being written for --Eagle River or M.I.T. I also think that, with some residents, I was less credible because I was a student.

Citizen Participation in a Technically-Oriented Department-

The Community Planning Department in Anchorage is a technically-oriented department. In most of their planning projects, public participation is reactive and conducted in a public hearing format. Rarely are citizens used to define the focus and direction of a planning project.

The Eagle River Study was one of the first projects (along with the Urban Design Study) to allow citizens to define the focus and direction of a planning project. The public participation effort in Eagle River, in my opinion, was successful. Over one hundred Eagle River area residents participated in the three planning workshops. The workshop participants help shape the course of the study and strongly influenced the development of the study's recommendations.

The Planning Department administrators' reaction to the public participation effort varied from skepticism to indifference. They worried that, with such extensive participation, I might be building up false hopes or making undeliverable promises in the community. They also believed, in my opinion, that increased public participation would increase the chance of public controversy. Other than giving me some brief words about their concerns before my workshops, the administrators did not show much interest in the public participation process used in Eagle River.

The Municipal Assemblyperson's response to the citizen participation effort is unclear. The Eagle River Assemblyperson attended and participated in all of the workshops. After the second workshop, he told me that he thought the workshops were going well. But, after the more lively third workshop, he attended a meeting with the Mayor and the Planning Department Director. He told them that he thought the Planning Department was stirring up trouble in Eagle River. The third workshop made it apparent to those in attendance that the Eagle River community is deeply divided over some important development issues. I think the Assemblyperson realized this and knew that he would

have to become involved in these sensitive issues. In my opinion, he was not looking forward to the involvement.

The planning staff was supportive of the citizen participation process and watched to see how it would work. The planner who had written the 1979 Eagle River-Chugiak-Eklutna Comprehensive Plan attended two of the workshops. He seemed interested in comparing the present process with the participation process he used with the Eagle River public in 1979. Another planner followed the process and used it to think about ways to develop a better citizen participation process for her work in transportation planning.

The Eagle River public seemed to respond very favorably to the citizen participation process used in their community. Attendance at all of the workshops was good. Several people personally praised our efforts. The press coverage of the workshops was accurate and supportive. In my opinion, the process has helped build public support for future Municipal planning efforts in the Eagle River community.

Planning in Alaska-

Planners in the rest of the United States have several false perceptions about planning in Alaska. One perception is that Alaska is wallowing in wealth. With the wealth, it is believed, the State is building an extravagant new capital city, constructing new homes for every Alaskan, and planning every square inch of the huge state. It is also thought that there are at least a dozen planning jobs for every qualified planner in the state.

The perception is not true. The capital city will probably remain in Juneau. Housing, especially rental housing, is expensive and in short supply in many parts of the state. Several State planning programs have been cut back dramatically. And, planning jobs are not abundant.

Although Alaska is probably financially better off than many New England and Midwestern states in 1982, the State is presently short of funds. The recent drop in the price of oil on the world market has reduced the State's anticipated 1983 revenues from over three billion dollars to about two billion dollars. The expected 1983 State budget will be just over two billion dollars.

The State's budget is large for a state of just 400,000 people. But, it is justifiably large. The State is financing a large number of capital projects now. Most of the projects in urban areas like Anchorage are being built to meet the public facility demand of rapid population growth. In rural Alaska, the capital expenditures are being used to provide basic public facility needs like clean water and sanitary sewer services.

The operating costs of government in Alaska are much higher than in the lower 48 states. With so few people spread out over a huge state, transportation costs are large and economies of scale are difficult to achieve. Personnel costs in Alaska are greater because of the higher cost of living in the state.

Another false perception planners in other states have about planning in Alaska is that Alaskans do not like planning. In Eagle River, the attitudes of the citizens towards planning appeared to be like those of people in similar situations in other states. Eagle River is a community changing rapidly from a quiet, small town into a bedroom suburb of Anchorage. The attitudes of the community towards planning fell into two categories. Suburban newcomers to Eagle River and old-time residents that did not own developable land wanted to see the community remain like a small town. They were willing to review new development, prescribe design and siting standards, encourage transit use, and buy park land to help keep Eagle River from becoming "just another suburb". The old-time Eagle River residents that owned developable property hated to see Eagle River become an ugly highway commercial strip. But, they wanted to get the most money for the land they owned in the community. They feared excessive regulation to preserve the small town qualities of Eagle River would scare away developers and reduce the price of their property.

The attitudes of people towards planning in Eagle River did not depend on who was more "Alaskan". They depended on the interests of the individual. Land owners naturally wanted to get top dollar out of their investments. Planning, to them, was seen as a scam to reduce their profits. Suburban homeowners and long-time residents wanted to see their small town lifestyles preserved. Planning, for them, offered a way to preserve certain community qualities they valued.

I think most Alaskans, including the developers who want maximum return on their investments and the preservationists who want things to remain as they are, have very clearly defined ideas about what they do not want their Alaskan communities to become. The challenge of a planner in Alaska is to figure out what Alaskans do want their communities to become and to develop strategies to get them there.

The Chugiak-Eagle River Star
January 21, 1982



THE

Chugiak - Eagle River **Star** 

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— EDITORIAL —

Danger In Thinking Too Small

A meeting of some consequence will be held next Thursday evening at Eagle River Library. Residents will be asked to give their views on future directions for downtown Eagle River.

Some of the topics under discussion will be expansions of concerns expressed during meetings last year held in connection with a plan for coastal trails and open space.

GROWTH PROJECTIONS FOR this community indicate that Chugiak - Eagle River will become a metropolis of its own within the next few years. The number of people still to move here will cause the downtown area to change dramatically. What now are open fields, small business buildings and remodeled homes will become large shopping centers, high-rise office buildings and other commercial centers.

There will be off-shoots of the downtown development. Neighborhood shopping centers will spring up in outlying areas. Not too far down the pike will come business centers similar to present-day Eagle River in other parts of the community.

Following that development will come concerns over the urban core — much the same concerns which of late have been raised about the downtown Anchorage area. Good planning with clear foresight could avoid some of those problems here.

WHAT SHOULD DOWNTOWN Eagle River of the future be like? Should there be land set aside for city center parks? What will be the traffic flow — how wide should rights-of-way be, what provisions need to be made for parking and mass transit, and what access points should be opened? Should density be controlled by limitations on building heights and, if so, what impact will that have on other neighborhoods? What type buffers should be required around the downtown center? Should the business center be controlled or allowed to expand? What is the effect of strip zoning in a community which is a strip?

These are but a few of the questions which need to be addressed as residents consider the future of their community. Answers will only come from a careful, deliberate and objective look.

As the decisions begin to form, it will be imperative that two points not be overlooked. Focus cannot be only on the downtown area because its development will be determined by what happens in the surrounding areas; conversely, what is done downtown will affect outlying areas. Secondly, whatever is decided as a goal must be flexible enough to allow for changes in conditions and unforeseen circumstances. Times change, needs and desires change.

MOST OF US would perhaps prefer to see as little change as possible. But we must be realistic in assessing the future. Growth may be slowed but it cannot be stopped. It would appear that the greatest danger could lie in thinking too small and failing to adequately prepare for what might come.

The meeting starts at 7:30 p.m. If you expect to live here five, 10 or 20 years from now, what begins to take place next Thursday is important to you.

Downtown Eagle River Future Subject Of Planning Study

Planning for the future of the downtown Eagle River area will be discussed next Thursday in the first of three workshops to be held here on the subject.

Local residents will be asked to give their opinions, according to Neil Klopfenstein of the municipal planning department, "because they may view it differently than someone from Anchorage."

Goal of the study would be to

"develop a set of actions that can be taken to remedy the negative impacts of rapid growth, increased traffic and strip commercial development in downtown Eagle River," Klopfenstein said. Need for such a study has been mentioned frequently and one item — a parking and traffic flow study — was called for in the Comprehensive plan adopted in 1979.

The study would produce three plans, Klopfenstein noted. First would be a look at land use, open space and traffic circulation to determine possible location of public facilities, identification of open space corridors and recommendations for land use buffering.

Second in the study would be identification of capital projects which might improve the downtown area and work toward goals developed in the initial concept report.

Land management techniques which might be applied to the downtown area would be subject of the third plan. Among items which might be considered, the planner said, are community council review, "performance" zoning, special permit systems or other means which would control land uses within the business district.

At Thursday's meeting, which will be held at 7:30 p.m. at Eagle River Library, residents will be asked to identify assets and define problems they see facing the downtown business area. They would also be asked for suggestions on ways to deal with the problems.

Recommendations resulting from the initial meeting would be presented for discussion at the second workshop, tentatively set for Feb. 25. Third workshop, to be held a month later, would consider the final draft of the plan to determine its acceptability to the community, Klopfenstein said. If further changes were required, these would be presented in April.

PUBLIC MEETING

with the
Municipal Planning Department
to
discuss the future development
of
Downtown Eagle River

The Municipality is conducting a study of the downtown Eagle River area. The study will develop a set of actions that can be taken to remedy the negative impacts of rapid growth, increased traffic and strip commercial development. The direction of the study will be based upon a series of citizen meetings.

Thursday, Jan. 28, 1982
7:30 p.m. Eagle River Library
PLEASE ATTEND!

For further information, contact Neil Klopfenstein
at 264-4226



Municipality of Anchorage
TONY KNOWLES, Mayor

P.O. #10308-38
Publ. 1/21/82

The Chugiak-Eagle River Star
February 4, 1982

Residents Pen Their Views On Downtown Area Future

With marking pens and topographical maps of the area, some 30 enthusiastic residents colored downtown Eagle River's future at a meeting Thursday night at the Eagle River library.

The session was the first of three which members of the Municipality's planning department are scheduling here to help determine how the area between the north and south exits along the Old Glenn Highway will be developed.

"We really want to see what people who live here want," planner Neil Klopfenstein told the group. "We want to know what you think downtown Eagle River's real assets are, what its problems are, what should be done and who should do it."

He warned, however, that when the study ends, "If anything is to get done it has to be because you want it to get done." Plans, he pointed out, "could sit on a shelf" unless residents back their use.

One participant expressed the sentiment of many residents when he told Klopfenstein that "it seems like we've been studied to death" and wondered whether the new plan would eliminate the planning completed three years ago when the comprehensive plan was adopted.

Klopfenstein explained that the comprehensive plan dealt only with generalities. What he wanted the community to do was to be specific in pin-pointing assets and drawbacks.

After an hour of working in small groups, residents had used their markers to indicate on the maps problems that ranged from traffic bottlenecks to the need for a snow removal dump site.

They cited the community's unattractive entrance, its inconsistent building and site design, its need for open space and green belts, and for a public meeting place that included a central facility for senior citizens, day care, emergency medical treatment and performing arts. They called attention to lack of recreational planning in the

downtown area, and to low business density that is contributing to a sprawling strip development. They saw a need for public water and expansion of city sewers, for street names and signs, and a town square.

Eyeing the lengthening list of problems, long-time resident Glenn Briggs quipped, "it looks to me like we're in one hell of a shape."

Another resident wondered, tongue-in-cheek, "who'd want to live out here with all these problems?"

Klopfenstein gave the group an opportunity to select what each member felt were the three problems most in need of solutions — and then, when one resident called attention to a special threat that no one had thought to list, gave an additional "free" vote for it.

It was the continued storage of dynamite near the north exit to Eagle River on the west side of the Glenn Highway. A dynamite explosion in the storage bunkers several years ago caused widespread damage throughout the community. Despite law suits and appeals that explosive storage be discontinued, the bunkers are still in use.

Other problems which were the top vote-getters were the need for traffic control, for green belts and open space, and for a visual site design.

Two concerns not directly associated with the downtown area were also emphasized, overcrowded schools and the lack of school sites, and small lot sizes for residences.

At the close of the session, Eagle River Valley Community Council president Bill Lyford echoed the feeling of most of those taking part when he said, "This is exactly the way this should be done to get the community involved."

Eagle River Community Council president Meg Gerard reminded the group that councils also address problems and encouraged residents to "bring your interest to the community council."

Klopfenstein said that he and other members of the planning department would be back Feb. 25 with suggestions "for different things we can do, different approaches to solving these problems" and asked that residents return "so we can get feedback from our suggestions."

The third meeting in March, he said, would present implementation strategies — how to get improvements done. He encouraged anyone with suggestions or questions about the plan to call him at 264-4226.

Second Downtown Planning Session Slated Next Thursday

Options and actions will be involved in decisions which local residents make next Thursday.

When municipal planners conduct the second in a series of three workshops on how the downtown business district of Eagle River will be developed, they'll present choices which won't be easy.

Planner Neil Klopfenstein hopes that all residents who are interested in having a say in those choices will attend the workshop which starts at 7:30 p.m. at Eagle River Library.

At the initial workshop in February, residents identified four areas which they felt needed to be addressed in planning the sort of business district they'd like to see developed. These included solving transportation and traffic problems, considering aesthetics, greenbelt-open space development, and a community center or focal point.

At next Thursday's meeting, Klopfenstein plans to present options for each, along with slides, maps, diagrams and explanations. He hopes that the group will decide which of the options will be the priorities for the next step: action.

Action, Klopfenstein says, also involves one or more choices which include money, regulations or policy.

The choices, in turn, call for tradeoffs. Something good may cost more than the community is willing to pay — either in money or in additional regulations. A vote at the end of the workshop session next week will give residents a chance to decide what their priorities are.

A final set of recommendations based on Thursday's workshop will be ready for consideration in March, and after they are refined, they'll be presented to the Assembly, a first step in implementing the long-range plans.

Klopfenstein said he will also be taking the completed plan to community councils and the planning and zoning commission.

In the meantime, he hopes as many persons as possible will attend the last two workshops.

PUBLIC MEETING

with the
Municipal Planning Department
to
discuss the future development
of
Downtown Eagle River

The Municipality is conducting a study of the downtown Eagle River area. The study will develop a set of actions that can be taken to remedy the negative impacts of rapid growth, increased traffic and strip commercial development. At this second of three meetings, preliminary findings will be presented.

Thursday, Feb. 25, 1982
7:30 p.m. Eagle River Library
PLEASE ATTEND!

For further information, contact Neil Klopfenstein
at 264-4226

Municipality of Anchorage
TONY KNOWLES, Mayor

New Audience At Second Meeting:

Downtown Planners Hear Different View

The scenario which municipal planners found facing them at the second of a series of meetings Thursday to plan for future growth of downtown Eagle River went something like this:

Take 30 interested residents who attend the first workshop. Cut the number in half and replace those 15 with 15 others who didn't attend the first session. What you get, planners Neil Klopfenstein and Tom Nelson discovered, is "a real different message."

The emphasis at the first meeting in January, Klopfenstein felt, had been one on providing open space and greenbelts, an aesthetics approach to making the business district more attractive.

The new makeup of citizens at last Thursday's meeting were what he termed "more developer oriented" and their major concerns were transportation and establishment of a voluntary site plan review process.

They thought guidelines which could be recommended for the construction or renovation of buildings were important, but did not want them to be mandatory.

Last week's workshop-goers felt that a community center — the town-square concept which January's citizens had placed high on their list of options — could be combined with the recreation center which will be built next year at a site at the north access to Eagle River. February's planners had wanted it closer to the Pippel Field shopping centers.

February planners recommended that the Schroeder air strip north of Pippel Field be set aside for park purposes.

But their major concern was transportation. "We had all kinds of requests for improvements," Klopfenstein said.

He was urged to contact the Department of Transportation to request them to install traffic control lights on the Old Glenn Highway, and to build a third Eagle River interchange with the Glenn Highway.

Because the two sets of ideas were so different in their emphasis, Klopfenstein said he and his staff will be attempting to find a middle ground and working

out "an inbetween plan". It will probably put a little more emphasis on transportation and a little less on parks. But he hopes to have a tentative implementation plan drawn up by March 25. He thinks it will be one that could be refined to present to the Assembly for final approval.

But Klopfenstein adds that if there are major discrepancies between what the long range plan proposes and what local residents want, then the staff will go back to the drawing boards once more.

He plans to have copies of the proposed implementation available early in the week of the meeting. Copies will be placed at the Eagle River Library and the Eagle River Star, he said, so that residents will have an opportunity to review the proposals before the workshop meeting, which will be at 7:30 p.m. on the 25th in the Eagle River Library. It's open to anyone interested, whether or not they've attended the earlier meetings. He'll notify those who have been at the workshops of the meeting date.

Planners Recommend Review Of Downtown Development

The Chugiak-Eagle River Star
March 18, 1982

A site plan review committee which would hear proposals for downtown business development will be a cornerstone of a long-range plan that municipal planner Neil Klopfenstein will unveil at the last of three public meetings in Eagle River next Thursday.

The meeting will start at 7:30 p.m. at the Eagle River Library, and participants in the two earlier workshops, and any others who are interested in joining the discussion are encouraged to attend.

"If you disagree — or if you agree — with the long range plan, Thursday will be the time to say so," said planner Linda Snyder.

Klopfenstein was out of town this week, but will be back in time to conduct the final meeting. His plan, which planners feel is a compromise between the first

workshop which emphasized aesthetics and a second which stressed transportation needs, is already completed, and copies will be available at the Eagle River Library or the Star on Tuesday.

Snider said that one of the basic problems that grew out of the workshops was the level of direction that the public should be given in the development of the business district.

She said that instead of imposing strict design regulations, the final draft proposal will call for a site plan review committee which will hold hearings on any large development planned for the downtown area.

The meeting would be required before land use permits were issued by the Department of Public Works, and would give the public an opportunity to address community concerns.

Snyder said that Klopfenstein's proposal would require an ordinance to create what she called a zoning "overlay". She explained that this would add a requirement to existing zoning within the business district that would not be required in other similarly-zoned areas.

Although developers would not be legally required to follow the committee's recommendations, the meetings would make them aware of public sentiment.

At next week's meeting, Klopfenstein will be "testing out his scheme to see if he has hit a balance," Snyder said. The plan will include proposals in other categories, including policy direction and land management, as well as the design committee.

"He needs feedback and reactions," she added, and called this meeting the most important of the three monthly workshops. The final draft of the long range plan will be presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Anchorage Assembly for adoption.

PUBLIC MEETING

with the
Municipal Planning Department
to
discuss the future development
of
Downtown Eagle River

The Municipality is conducting a study of the downtown Eagle River area. The study will develop a set of actions that can be taken to remedy the negative impacts of rapid growth, increased traffic and strip commercial development. At this third meeting, recommended actions will be presented.

Thursday, March 25, 1982

7:30 p.m. Eagle River Library
PLEASE ATTEND!

For further information, contact Neil Klopfenstein
at 264-4226



Municipality of Anchorage
TONY KNOWLES, Mayor

P.O. #21219
Publ: 3/18/82

Plan For Downtown Area Now Ready For Decisions

Recommendations for the development of downtown Eagle River will be referred to the Platting and Zoning Commission and the Anchorage Assembly, following a three-month study involving many area residents.

The study, conducted by Municipal Planner Neil Klopfenstein, was concluded last week at a final workshop meeting in Eagle River.

Some 50 persons who had worked with the planning department to consider specific problems of the business area and how they could be solved heard Klopfenstein review the study results.

For the most part, the recommendations drew favorable reactions. But considerable objections were raised to two of the proposals, one to attempt to acquire land behind the North Slope Restaurant for a transit facility and commuter parking, and another to require developers of large-size residential and commercial developers to discuss their plans with a local committee before land use permits could be obtained.

The objection to using gravel pit property on Coronado Road for the transit facility was apparently largely over the cost of purchasing the property. Most seemed to feel both the transit center and commuter parking should be in the downtown area, rather than at the recreation center site where a mini-city hall is proposed. But they thought the cost would be prohibitive, unless municipal land in other parts of the area could be sold, or exchanged, to acquire the Coronado property.

The recommendation for a development review committee for large downtown projects brought both strong support and strong opposition.

Opinion was so evenly divided that Klopfenstein said he will present both the arguments "to the decision-members. It was a difficult thing to compromise on." He said he felt the final decision on whether or not to establish such a committee should be up to the planning and zoning commission and the Assembly.

Those who opposed the committee and the review process saw it as a waste of time, since the committee's recommendations would not be binding. They also felt that residents should not be able to comment on major developments unless they were helping pay for them, an opinion based on the belief that property owners should be able to develop their land as they see fit, within already-established regulations.

Those who favored a review committee felt that it would provide residents with an opportunity to see what was proposed for the community in the early stages of development that would ultimately affect them. They believed that in some instances, developers would respond to community pressure and would change some of their plans if the public had an opportunity to present their views. They saw it as a beginning at making development "a community thing."

The final draft of the study points out that it reflects Eagle River residents' desire to see the business district develop into the area's primary employment and retail center, but at the same time they want facilities to be centrally focused, easily accessible and aesthetically pleasing.

They support road and pedestrian improvements, minimal strip commercial development, and acquisition and development of parks and open space in the downtown area, to act as buffer zones for other land uses.

Capital improvement recommendations include acquiring Schroeder Air Strip and adjacent ponds as a neighborhood park for the downtown area, adoption of a downtown green-belt-trail system, and building the mini-city hall center on the recreation center site. However, the study also recommends that whenever possible, community facilities should be located centrally, rather than on the fringes of the downtown area.

The study urges the municipal AMATS committee to meet with the State Department of Transportation and Eagle River residents to discuss traffic management and future highway projects.

It asks that the downtown greenbelt be included in areawide trails plans, and that the municipality initiate vacation of unused road right of way on the Carol Creek trail to redesignate it for park purposes.

The study concludes by noting the need for additional access to the Glenn Highway from downtown Eagle River.

The work of Klopfenstein and other planners drew favorable comments from persons who have attended the meetings. They were praised for seeking local input, and using the recommendations in their final proposals.

Klopfenstein said that he was "very pleased" with the interest and cooperation of local residents.



Reward For Apathy

Dear Editor,

We are about to receive our "just reward" for citizen apathy. All of us are guilty, more or less, for what is about to become a 1982 "Muldoon Special" for our main street: no trees, median grass areas, or other beautification to keep the rural flavor most of us desired for Eagle River when we moved here. We are now saddled with a situation that will be the typical, uncreative strip development typical of Spenard, Mountain View and Muldoon.

We citizens were remiss in not giving substantial input a year or so back when public hearings were held.

However, we will have some chance to salvage Eagle River from this patchy kind of development.

Mr. Neil Kloppenstein of the Municipal Planning Department and his staff have been truthfully and tactfully trying to make us aware of the total community concept of planning. The Municipal Planning Department truly wants to be responsive to the public of Eagle River, Chugiak and Birchwood. But, they must go through the public hearing process with numerous meetings. It is a good process, but too slow in light of our very rapid development. By the time Mr. Kloppenstein and staff have presented their report back to the people another 1,000 houses or so have been started and the overall objective of a planned community is a moot point.

The establishment of a Citizen Planning Review Board ordinance is crucial. It is mandatory that Mr. Kloppenstein, Mr. O'Connor, Mayor Knowles, and District 8 legislators know strongly that we do not wish to become another "patchwork" community. IT IS YOUR LAST CHANCE.

Your Community Council's and Chamber of Commerce can be of substantial assistance in this if you will support them with strong

testimony at their meetings. The Eagle River Council meets every second Thursday of the month at the Eagle River Library at 7:30. The Eagle River Valley Council meets at Joy Luterhan Day Care Center at 7:30 p.m.

It is absolutely necessary for the citizens of Eagle River to do the following:

A. Call Mr. Kloppenstein at 264-4224 and tell him you support the total community planning and development concept.

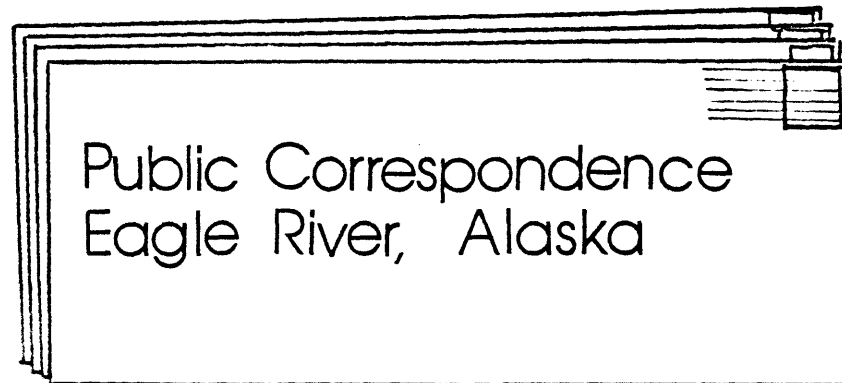
B. Insist to our representatives in government that a Citizen Planning and Review Board be

established immediately in Eagle River.

C. Make it known to the Mayor, Municipal Assembly and Zoning and Platting Board that you want a municipal ordinance establishing the Citizen Planning and Review Board passed as expeditiously as possible.

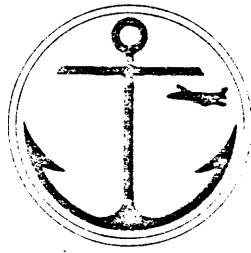
Sincerely,
Bill Lyford

Appendix 2



INITIAL CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE PUBLIC.....January, 1982

**Municipality
of
Anchorage**



POUCH 6-650

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99502-0650

(907) 264-4111

TONY KNOWLES,
MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

The Municipal Planning Department is beginning a planning study of the Eagle River business area along the Old Glenn Highway. The study will look at problems affecting the business district. Three products from the study are planned. The first product will be a conceptual plan that will look at land use, open space and traffic circulation in the downtown area. The second product will be a short-range public improvement plan. The final product will explore various land management options that might be used in the Eagle River Central Business District.

The direction of the study will be determined by 3 workshops with the public. At the first workshop, the assets and problems of downtown Eagle River will be discussed, and ideas to deal with those problems will be solicited. The input from this workshop will be used to draw up several sets of recommendations that would deal with the problems in downtown Eagle River. The second workshop will allow the public to comment on these alternative recommendations. Public response to the various proposals will be used to develop a final set of recommendations. At the third workshop, the final set of recommendations will be presented to the public for review and comment.

The workshop schedule follows:

1st Workshop "Problem Definition"	January 28th, Thursday Eagle River Library 7:30 p.m.
2nd Workshop "Options"	February 25th, Thursday Eagle River Library 7:30 p.m.
3rd Workshop "Final Proposals"	March 25th, Thursday Eagle River Library 7:30 p.m.

The Eagle River and Eagle River Valley Community Councils and Eagle River Chamber of Commerce have endorsed this study and will be participating in the workshops. Your participation is welcome. Please attend the workshops and encourage your friends and neighbors to participate as well. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Neil R. Klopfenstein
Planning Intern

NRK/da

**Municipality
of
Anchorage**



POUCH 6-650
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99502-0650
(907) 264-4111
TONY KNOWLES,
MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

Dear Interested Citizen:

At our first workshop in January, the assets and problems of Eagle River were discussed. Since then, the planning staff has been looking at ways to capitalize on Eagle River's assets and address the community's problems. Enclosed is an outline of some of the options and implementation strategies that can be taken to make downtown Eagle River a better place to live and work.

The purpose of the second workshop on February 25 is to discuss these options and implementation strategies. Eagle River residents will be asked at the workshop to indicate and prioritize their preferences on specific options and strategies. Their input will be used to develop a final set of recommendations that will be presented at a third workshop.

Keep in mind that the outline is intended to give an idea of what kinds of options and implementation strategies are available to Eagle River. No preference of one option or implementation strategy over another is suggested at this time.

We look forward to your participation in the forthcoming workshops. The second workshop to discuss options and implementation strategies will be held on Thursday, February 25, 1982, at the Eagle River Library. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 7:30 p.m. Final recommendations of the Downtown Eagle River Study will be presented at a third workshop on Thursday, March 25, 1982, at 7:30 p.m. in the Eagle River Library. Please keep that date open on your calendar.

Please encourage your friends and neighbors to attend both workshops. Extra copies of the outline and the final recommendations will be available at the Eagle River Library and at the Chugiak-Eagle River Star office.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Neil Klopfenstein at 264-4226. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Meehan
Director of Planning

MJM/NK/da

**Municipality
of
Anchorage**



POUCH 6-650
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99502-0650
(907) 264-4111

TONY KNOWLES,
MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

March 17, 1982

Dear Interested Citizen:

The Municipal Planning Department's third meeting to discuss the future development of downtown Eagle River will be held on Thursday, March 25, 1982, at 7:30 p.m. in the Eagle River Library. At this meeting, recommendations to capitalize on Eagle River's assets and address the community's problems will be presented.

Copies of the proposals will be available at the Eagle River Library and at the Chugiak-Eagle River Star office on Tuesday, March 23rd. Please try to pick up and review a copy of the recommendations before the meeting.

After the workshop, the recommendations will be incorporated into a plan for consideration by the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Municipal Assembly. It is important that you attend this meeting so your ideas and opinions can be heard.

Please encourage your friends and neighbors to attend the workshop. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Neil Klopfenstein at 264-4226. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Michael J. Meehan
Director of Planning

MJM/NK/ndm

Four major concerns were expressed by the Eagle River public at the first workshop. They include:

- 1) need for parks and greenbelts in downtown Eagle River;
- 2) need for traffic management and control in downtown Eagle River;
- 3) need to look at aesthetic issues; and
- 4) need for various community facilities.

Specific problems which relate to these themes were also discussed. For each problem, options (sometimes several) that might be used to solve or lessen the problem have been developed. The solution options were drawn from ideas that were aired by the public at the first workshop and from the planning staff. Each option represents a different approach to the problem.

Strategies or methods to implement the various options are outlined. Some strategies may be more effective than others. The strategies give an idea of who might be involved in solving a problem, what funds might be needed, and how much regulation or control might be necessary to implement an option. The implementation strategies generally fall into four categories. The four areas include public investment or capital improvement strategies, regulatory strategies, community action strategies, and policy recommendations.

Public Investment strategies require substantial amounts of money from the Municipality or the State. A public investment strategy would be used to acquire property for a downtown park or to build a community center, for example.

Regulatory strategies involve developing new regulations to guide new growth in Eagle River. New regulations might be written to require site plan review or landscaping.

Community Action strategies require the resources of private and voluntary organizations in the community. A Chamber of Commerce/Community Council-sponsored architectural theme for downtown Eagle River or a voluntary landscaping program would involve community action strategies.

Policy recommendations are statements that are directed toward guiding the actions of other government agencies. Policy recommendations could be directed, for example, to the State DOT for consideration of stop lights along the Old Glenn Highway.

The purpose of the second workshop is to discuss the options and implementation strategies. Eagle River residents will be asked to indicate and prioritize their preferences on

specific options and strategies. Their preferences will be used to develop a set of final recommendations that will be presented on March 25, 1982.

Options and Implementation Strategies

PARKS/OPEN SPACE

Problem: Need for a downtown park:

<u>Options:</u>	<u>Possible Implementation Strategies</u>
- Develop Schroeder Air Strip into a park	°Municipal Acquisition/Development of the Land
- Develop a small park on a lot along Business Blvd.	°Municipal Acquisition/Development of the Land
- Develop a small on a lot near the Bank buildings	°Municipal Acquisition/Development of the Land
- Develop a small park on a lot across Business Blvd. from the new Post Office site	°Municipal Acquisition/Development of the Land
- Develop a small park in the pit site behind the North Slope Restaurant	°Municipal Acquisition/Development of the Land
- Encourage businesses to develop small parks next to their businesses	°Zoning Incentives for developers to develop parks

Problem: need for Greenbelts

<u>Options:</u>	<u>Possible Implementation Strategies</u>
- Develop a greenbelt system in downtown Eagle River	°Municipal Acquisition/Development of a greenbelt system
	°Obtain easements across already platted pieces of land for greenbelts
	°Require dedication of planned greenbelts in new subdivisions

° Private donation of lands for greenbelts

Problem: Carol Creek Greenbelt

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

- | | |
|--|---|
| - Develop a greenbelt that connects the new Recreation Center to the Glenn Highway along Carol Creek | ° Municipal Acquisition/Development of the greenbelt land
° Obtain easements across already platted pieces of land for greenbelts
° Private donations of lands for greenbelts |
|--|---|

Problem: Good Siting of New Development

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

- | | |
|--|--|
| - Site Plan Review Process | ° Non-binding Ad Hoc Review by Voluntary groups
° Binding review using an official review group |
| - Develop Siting Guidelines | ° Siting guidelines for use by developers are drawn up by planning staff, Chamber of Commerce, Community Council, etc. |
| - Zoning Amendments to require certain prescribed siting standards | ° Zoning amendments developed to require certain siting considerations |
| - Tree Preservation Ordinance | ° Tree preservation ordinance drawn up to protect existing trees on site |

Aesthetics

Problem: Unattractive Business Buildings

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

- | | |
|---|--|
| - Architectural Design Review Process | °Develop architectural criteria that new development must meet (through ordinance)

°Offer zoning incentives to encourage adherence to architectural criteria |
| - Develop an architectural theme that can be used voluntarily | °Offer incentives to new & existing development for adherence to architectural theme (e.g. Chamber awards)

°Develop architectural guidelines that can be voluntarily used by new & existing development |
-

Problem: Need for Landscaping

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

- | | |
|---|---|
| - Develop a landscape theme for malls & strip development | °Develop landscape standards that new development must meet through ordinance

°Develop landscape guidelines that can be voluntarily used by new & existing development

°Offer zoning incentives to new development for adherence to landscape theme

°Offer incentives to new & existing development for adherence to landscape themes (e.g. Chamber award) |
| - Landscape Roadway | °Landscape Roadway Project |
-

Problem: Maintaining Small Town Atmosphere

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

- Limit Building Heights °Change zoning ordinance to limit building heights in Eagle River

- Control Signs °Establish a sign ordinance
°Establish guidelines for signage and encourage compliance
°Offer incentives (e.g. give awards to good signs) to encourage good signage

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

- Minimize Strip development °Confine limits on commercial growth to area along Old Glenn Highway between North Glenn and Eagle River exits

°Encourage the use of shared parking areas by businesses

°Minimize the number of curbs cuts onto the Old Glenn Highway

- Maximize Pedestrian Access to Businesses °Develop guidelines and plans to link existing businesses for pedestrians

°Greenbelt acquisition and development

°Site plan review for new development

°Shared parking among businesses

Problem: Need for a Central Focus to downtown Eagle River

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

- Locate major community facilities °Acquire land & build
- BAC

downtown

- Mini-City Hall
 - Community Center, etc. downtown
-

- Locate a park or Town Square downtown (preferably next to community facilities)
-

°Municipal acquisition/development of downtown land

- Integrate new development with existing development

°Maximize pedestrian access

°Share parking facilities among businesses

°Site plan review of new development

°Zero-lot line commercial development

°Increase density in downtown area

Community Facilities

Problem: Need for Recreation Facilities Downtown

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

-
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| - Build a small downtown park/tot lot | °Municipal Acquisition/Development of land |
|---------------------------------------|--|
-
- | | |
|---|--|
| - Develop a major community park in the downtown area w/ball-fields, large open space, etc. (Schroeder field) | °Municipal Acquisition/Development of the Land |
|---|--|
-
- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| - Develop Trail/Greenbelt System | °Municipal Acquisition/Development of the greenbelts |
| | °Obtain easements across properties that have been subdivided |
| | °Require dedication of planned greenbelts in new subdivisions |
-
- | | |
|--|--|
| - Build an indoor recreation facility (construction already scheduled) | °Municipal Development of the facility |
|--|--|
-

Problem: Need for Senior Center
Daycare Center
Cultural/Meeting Center
Community Center

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

-
- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| - Build/Use 3 facilities | °Municipality Buys 3 existing structures |
| | °Municipality builds 3 new structures |
| | °Rent 3 existing facilities |
| | °Borrow 3 existing facilities (churches, schools, library, etc) |
-

- Build/Use 1
joint facility

- °Municipality builds new facility
- °Rent an existing facility
- °Municipality buys an existing
facility

TRANSPORTATION

Problem: Need for Park 'n' Ride Stations in downtown Eagle River

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

- Build Park'n'Ride Lots and waiting areas along the Old Glenn at:

- the Valley Road intersection
- the Loop Road intersection
- the new Recreation Center site

°Municipal Acquisition/Development of the land

- Use/Rent Existing Parking Facilities from the Private Sector for use as a Park'n'Ride lot

°Voluntary agreement with businesses to use portions of existing parking facilities for Park'n'Ride

°Municipality rents from owners portions of existing parking facilities for Park'n'Ride

°Businesses supply Transit Huts as Customer Service

°Use lobbies of existing buildings and businesses for transit waiting

Problem: Need for a Bus Accommodation Center

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

- Build a BAC at the Recreation Center site

°Municipal Acquisition/Development

- Build a BAC somewhere along Business Blvd.

°Municipal Acquisition/Development

- Build a BAC near the intersection of Eagle River Loop Rd. and the Old Glenn Hwy. °Municipal Acquisition/Development

Problem: Need for Parking in Eagle River

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

- Provide Public Parking Areas & Reduce Parking Requirements for Individual Businesses (in return for amenity concessions) °Municipal Development and code changes to reduce requirements & require amenities

-
- Private businesses provide their own parking °Maintain Status Quo

-
- Private businesses share parking facilities in clusters °Change zoning ordinance to encourage clustered parking

Problem: Need for stop lights along the Old Glenn Highway

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

- Schedule meetings with appropriate ADOT officials to learn criteria they use to place stop lights and to complain/explain the traffic problems in Eagle River -

Problem: Minimize the number of curb cuts along the Old Glenn Highway

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

- Limit curb cuts on the Old Glenn 5-lane to 1 per x ft. °Voluntary compliance of owners of existing development

°Regulate number and distance between curb cuts in new development

Problem: Need to Improve Existing Eagle River Interchange

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

- Schedule a meeting with appropriate AKDOT officials to complain/explain the interchange problems

Problem: Need for a Third Interchange in Eagle River area

Options: Possible Implementation Strategies

- Build a new interchange between the Eagle River and North Glenn interchanges

°Prepare a feasibility study and impact statement of the project - as a first step

- Build a bridge over the Eagle River Valley to connect Eagle River with Hiland Road.

°Prepare a feasibility study and impact statement of the project - as a first step

Prioritization

The Options and Implementation Strategies section gives you an idea how the problems mentioned in the first workshop can be addressed. As you can see, many things can be done, but there are always constraints--time, money, politics, etc. To decide where we go from here, some priorities need to be set. I have developed a set of actions that can be taken to help address some of the problems of downtown Eagle River. The actions all come from the Options and Implementation Tools section. Your job is to decide which of the actions presented below are the most important to take. In other words, which of the actions should have the highest priority?

Mark those actions which deserve High Priority in downtown Eagle River.

Remember - The Legislature has only so much money
- The Planning Dept. has limited Resources & Time (until mid-April) &
- Some actions may not be "politically" acceptable in Eagle River.

($\$$) - means dollars must expended
(Regulation) - means new regulations must be added
(Policy) - means further study may be needed and a policy to direct other gov't agencies will be issued

- _____ Buy property in downtown Eagle River for multi-Municipal use. For example, Mini-City Hall; Community Center; BAC; Town Square, and/or Small Park ($\$$)
- _____ Buy property in downtown Eagle River for use only as a park ($\$$)
- _____ Buy and/or negotiate easements for the Carol Creek greenbelt ($\$$)
- _____ Buy and/or negotiate easements for other parts of the downtown greenbelt ($\$$)
- _____ Develop an Official Site Plan Review Process for new development in downtown Eagle River. (Regulation)
- _____ Develop a set of site plan review guidelines that can be voluntarily used by developers in Eagle River (Policy)
- _____ Develop an official Architectural Design Review process for new development in Eagle River (Regulation)
- _____ Develop a set of architectural guidelines that can be voluntarily used in Eagle River (Policy)

- _____ Buy and develop the Schroeder Air Strip for a major park (\$)
- _____ Build a Community Center in downtown Eagle River (\$)
- _____ Build a Park'n'Ride Facility near the Recreation Center (\$)
- _____ Build a Park'n'Ride Facility downtown - in the Pippel Field area (\$)
- _____ Build a Park'n'Ride Facility near the Eagle River Elementary School/Eagle River Valley Road intersection (\$)
- _____ Build public parking lots in downtown Eagle River (\$)
- _____ Develop a Landscape Ordinance for new development in downtown Eagle River (Regulation)
- _____ Develop a set of landscapew guidlelines that can be voluntarily used in downtown Eagle River (Policy)
- _____ Landscape the Old Glenn Highway in the Central Business District area (\$)
- _____ Limit Building Heights in downtown Eagle River (Regulation)
- _____ Develop a sign control ordinance for downtown Eagle River (Regulation)
- _____ Through Negotiation, reduce, the number of existing curb cuts and limit the number of new curb cuts onto the Old Glenn Highway (Policy/Regulation)
- _____ Develop a plan to maximize pedestrian access of downtown Eagle River (Policy)
- _____ Explore ways to use the shared parking concept in downtown Eagle River (Policy/Regulation)
- _____ Make contacts with AKDOT to explore traffic control and stop lights on the Old Glenn Highway (Policy)
- _____ Make contacts with AKDOT to explore ways to Improve the Eagle River Interchange (Policy/\$)
- _____ Study the Feasibility & Impacts of a Third Interchange onto the Glenn Hwy. - downtown & Hyland Dr. (Policy)
- _____ Allow zero-lot line commercial development (Regulation)

Appendix 1

Definition of Terms:

Incentives: The use of incentives to accomplish a given task is an implementation tool. An incentive system exempts a developer from some generally applied regulation, in return for providing some benefit to the public. For example, a developer, under an incentive system, might be allowed to build a taller building than would normally be permitted under the zoning ordinance, provided he builds a small vest pocket park for employees and the public adjacent to the building.

Site Plan Review Process: Site plan review is another implementation tool. Site plan review involves the review of site plans. Site plan review can be used to check siting of buildings, drainage, parking configurations, traffic circulation, landscaping, and vegetation. Site plan reviews can also be used to negotiate specific changes in the siting and design of a proposed development. Site plan review recommendations can be binding or non-binding. The reviewing entity may be officially-designated or ad hoc. An ad hoc reviewing body would recommend changes while an official body could require changes. Site plan review presently exists for only conditional uses and planned unit developments. To expand site plan review to other types of development, an ordinance change would be required.

Overlay District: An overlay district is a zoning designation for a particular geographic area, establishing land use requirements in addition to those required by the existing zoning district. The "overlay district" concept allows site-specific or community-specific problems to be addressed through the zoning ordinance. The creation of an overlay district requires Planning & Zoning Commission review and Municipal Assembly approval.

Appendix 2

Implementation of the Code Changes: If there is a consensus that land use code changes are desirable to help solve some of the problems in the downtown Eagle River areas, several avenues of change are available. Changes could be introduced by:

- 1) amending the requirements of the existing land use zones in downtown Eagle River;
- 2) amending the land use permitting process;
- 3) creating a new "Eagle River Commercial District" zone; and
- 4) creating an "overlay district."

Amending the Requirements of the Existing Land Use Zones:

To amend the requirements of the existing land use zones in downtown Eagle River, the proposed amendments to must be reviewed by the Planning & Zoning Commission and approved by the Municipal Assembly. The major drawback of this process is that any changes made in the ordinance would apply throughout the Municipality. Changes that deal with specific Eagle River problems may be difficult to achieve with this method.

Amending the Land Use Permitting Process: Amendments to the land use permitting process also require review by the Planning & Zoning Commission and approval by the Municipal Assembly. Changes in the land use permitting process would be useful to implement site plan review ordinances, but not ordinances dealing with landscaping, architectural or signage ordinances. Changes in the land use permitting process would apply to all new development in Eagle River, Chugiak, Eklutna, and the Turnagain Arm area.

Creating a new "Eagle River Commercial District": Creating a new zoning district in downtown Eagle River would require several steps. The requirements of the new zone would have to be written by the planning staff, reviewed by the Planning & Zoning Commission, and approved by the Municipal Assembly. After the new zone has been approved, the land to be included in the new zoning districts would have to be rezoned from its existing status. This zoning change would also require Planning & Zoning Commission review and Municipal Assembly approval. The advantage of this method is that Eagle River-specific problems can be addressed because the new zoning district would include only the downtown area. Also, the a new zone could be used to enact a variety of measures from site plan review to landscape and signage ordinances. A disadvantage is that the process is time-consuming.

Creating an "Overlay District": In an "Overlay district," a special set of land use measures would apply to a specific

geographic area. These special overlay requirements would be in addition to the requirements of the existing zoning districts of the area. The creation of an "overlay district" in downtown Eagle River would require Planning Commission review and Municipal Assembly approval of the provisions and boundaries of the overlay. The advantage of the overlay district method is that it is as flexible as the special Eagle River commercial zone but less difficult to enact. The "overlay district" would allow Eagle River-specific problems to be addressed and can be used to require measures like site plan review, aesthetic controls, zoning incentives and landscape and signage ordinances.

EAGLE RIVER CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT STUDY

On the following pages, a set of policies and recommendations for downtown Eagle River is outlined. These policies and recommendations will be incorporated into a plan that will be presented to the Planning and Zoning Commission for consideration and to the Municipal Assembly for approval.

During recent public workshops, Eagle River residents expressed a desire to see the Eagle River central business district emerge as the primary commercial and employment center of the Eagle River-Chugiak-Eklutna region. The center they would like to see develop would be centrally focused, accessible, and aesthetically pleasing. The recommendations presented in this report outline actions that can be taken to achieve these goals.

At the meeting on March 25th, the policies and recommendations presented in this report will be discussed and your reactions solicited.

POLICIES

The following policies reflect Eagle River residents' desire to see the Eagle River Central Business District develop into the area's primary employment and retail center. The center citizens would like to see develop would be centrally focused, accessible, and aesthetically pleasing.

- 1) Acquisition and development of parks, open space, and greenbelt/trail systems in downtown Eagle River to provide recreation space for nearby residents and shoppers, to act as buffer areas between conflicting land uses, and to provide alternative access to residential and commercial areas should be given a high priority.
- 2) Automobile, transit, and pedestrian accessibility improvements should be given a high priority in downtown Eagle River.
- 3) Community facilities that would draw people into downtown Eagle River should be located in the center of the central business district rather than on the periphery. The location of new community facilities should take into account the residents' desire to see a centrally focused downtown.
- 4) Strip commercial development in the downtown area should be minimized.
- 5) Good site, architectural and signage design should be encouraged in downtown Eagle River to make the place more aesthetically pleasing and to add continuity and create a "sense of place" in the downtown area.
- 6) Citizens should be given an opportunity to participate in downtown development decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of this study were developed from the above policies and are divided into three categories - Capital Improvements, Land Management, and Municipal Actions. The capital improvement recommendations identify and prioritize needed public improvements in downtown Eagle River. The land management recommendations offer actions that can be used to guide development in downtown Eagle River. And, the Municipal Action recommendations are a list of "tasks" that the Municipality needs to complete in Eagle River.

Capital Improvement:

- 1) The Schroeder Air Strip and adjacent ponds should be acquired and developed as a neighborhood park to serve downtown Eagle River. Acquisition and development funds for this project should be included in the Municipal Capital Improvement Budget as funds become available.
- 2) The downtown greenbelt/trail system should be adopted as an amendment to the Areawide Trails Plan. Sections of the system that cannot be acquired through the platting process (AMC 21.80.135) should be purchased within the next 5 years. Acquisition and development funds should be sought from the Capital Improvement Program budget.
- 3) The gravel pit property behind the North Slope Restaurant on Coronado Avenue should be purchased for a transit facility, commuter parking lot, and downtown park. Acquisition and development funds should be included in the Municipal Capital Improvement Program budget as funds become available. Site planning studies should be undertaken under the direction of the Municipal Property Management Office.
- 4) The mini-City Hall center should be built at the proposed Recreation Center site during the summer of 1982. A commuter parking lot should be built next to the mini-City Hall for Anchorage-bound transit users. The adequacy of the facility and its location should be re-evaluated in 1985. If the facility and/or location are not adequate, the present Post Office property and adjacent property to the east should be re-considered as a site for a City Hall/Community Center complex. If the site is determined as appropriate, acquisition and development funding should be included in the Municipal Capital Improvement Program budget.

Land Management:

- 1) Through an overlay zone, the Municipality shall require developers of residential developments of over 10 units and commercial and industrial developments of over 5,000 square feet in Eagle River and Eagle River Valley to hold public meetings to discuss their development plans before Land Use Permits for the developments are granted. The meetings will be chaired by a development review committee made up of 5 Eagle River area residents.
- 2) Community facilities that would draw people into downtown Eagle River should be located in the center of the central business district rather than of the periphery. The location of new community facilities should take into account the residents' desire to see a centrally focused downtown area.
- 3) To retard future strip commercial development, the B-3 zone should not be expanded along the Old Glenn Highway beyond the North Glenn exit. Requests for rezones of property to B-3 along Eagle River Valley Road and Eagle River Loop Road should be granted only in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan.
- 4) Strip commercial businesses should be encouraged to share parking facilities and curb cuts. Shared parking and curb cuts increase the amount of parking available to businesses and reduce the number of traffic turning points along the road.
- 5) The three-step improvement program for the Eagle River Valley Road/Old Glenn Highway intersection and Eagle River interchange should be reviewed by the AMATS Committee. If the program is deemed appropriate, the Committee should request that the State Department of Transportation initiate the improvement program.

Municipal Actions:

- 1) The Municipal AMATS Committee should set up a meeting with the State Department of Transportation and the Eagle River area public to discuss traffic management and future highway projects in the Eagle River area.
- 2) A handbook for developers that outlines good siting techniques is being written and should be distributed to all Eagle River area developers.

- 3) Architectural design and signage guidelines should be written for business owners and tenants in the Eagle River central business district.
- 4) The downtown greenbelt/trail system should be adopted as an amendment to the Areawide Trails Plan. Following its adoption, trail easements may be obtained by the Platting Authority pursuant to AMC 21.80.135 on previously unplatted lands.
- 5) The Municipality should initiate a vacation and replat of the unused road right-of-way on the proposed Carol Creek trail to redesignate the road right-of-way for park purposes.
- 6) Further study is needed to determine the feasibility and advisability of providing additional access to the New Glenn Highway from downtown Eagle River. Population growth and travel patterns as well as the land use impacts, environmental concerns, costs and safety of each access alternative should be addressed in the evaluation.