

# MATANUSKA – SUSITNA BOROUGH TALKEETNA RIVERFRONT PARK



## LAND USE PLAN & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



AGNEW  
:: BECK



ADOPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY  
APRIL 6, 2004



NON-CODE ORDINANCE

By: Borough Manager  
Introduced: 03/16/04  
Public Hearing: 04/06/04  
Adopted: 04/06/04

**MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH  
ORDINANCE SERIAL NO. 04-050**

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH ASSEMBLY ADOPTING THE TALKEETNA RIVERFRONT PARK LAND USE PLAN AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY.

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WHEREAS, the Talkeetna Comprehensive Plan recommends that the certain land adjacent to the Talkeetna downtown and historic area be reserved and dedicated for public recreation and for certain economic developments; and

WHEREAS, the community of Talkeetna working with grants from the Alaska State Department of Community and Economic Development and the Denali Commission was able to obtain funding for a planning effort; and

WHEREAS, the Talkeetna Community Council led this planning effort and worked cooperatively with the Talkeetna Chamber of Commerce, the National Park Service, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and the Alaska Railroad Corporation; and

WHEREAS, a management plan for this 75-acre area has been prepared that provides for multiple uses, trails and day-use facilities, while maintaining a clean, natural setting, along with a plan for monitoring, management, and maintenance; and

WHEREAS, this plan was prepared with extensive public involvement and input; and

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Park, Recreation and Trails Advisory Board has recommended that the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly adopt the Talkeetna Riverfront Park Land Use Plan and Economic Development Strategy; and

WHEREAS, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Planning Commission passed Resolution 04-06 recommending the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly adopt the Talkeetna Riverfront Park Land Use Plan and Economic Development Strategy.

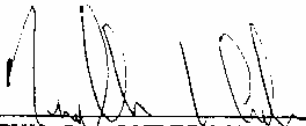
BE IT ENACTED:

Section 1. Classification. This is a non-code ordinance.

Section 2. Adoption of management plan. The the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly does hereby adopt the Talkeetna Riverfront Park Land Use and Economic Development Strategy.

Section 3. Effective date. Ordinance Serial No 04-050 shall take effect upon adoption by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly.

ADOPTED by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly this 6 day  
of April, 2004.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
TIMOTHY L. ANDERSON, Borough Mayor

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
MICHELLE M. MCGEHEE, Borough Clerk

(SEAL)

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: Bush, Allen, Colberg, Kvalheim, Simpson,  
Colver, and Vehrs

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This study was produced in part with Mini-Grant Assistance Funds made available through the State of Alaska Department of Community & Economic Development and the Denali Commission.

## WHO PREPARED THIS PLAN?

The Talkeetna Community Council spearheaded this planning effort, working cooperatively with the Talkeetna Chamber of Commerce, the National Park Service, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and the Alaska Railroad Corporation. A local steering committee guides the project (see page 8 for details). The project is funded by a grant from the Alaska Department of Community and Economic Development. Agnew::Beck Consulting and Land Design North assisted the community in the preparation of this plan.

If you have comments or questions about this plan, contact one of the parties below:

- Riverfront Plan Steering Committee Co-chairs

Billy Fitzgerald 907 733 2566 [info@denalitrekking.com](mailto:info@denalitrekking.com)

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## **BACKGROUND**

The community of Talkeetna grew up at the confluence of the Susitna and Talkeetna Rivers. The Talkeetna townsite is set back from the edge of these rivers, leaving a generous, largely natural area along the water. Over the years this land – a mix of open river bars and forest – has served many uses, including barge landing site, mine equipment staging area, campsite, flood defense and woodlot. Today residents and visitors enjoy the area for casual walks, picnicking, camping, fishing, bird watching, and great views of the mountains. More developed recreational activities, located east of the bridge, include a public boat launch, a campsite, and the starting point for commercial tours.

The purpose of this plan is to guide the future use of this valuable 75-acre area. This planning effort has included participation from the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the residents and businesses of Talkeetna and the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) which owns most of the property considered by this plan.

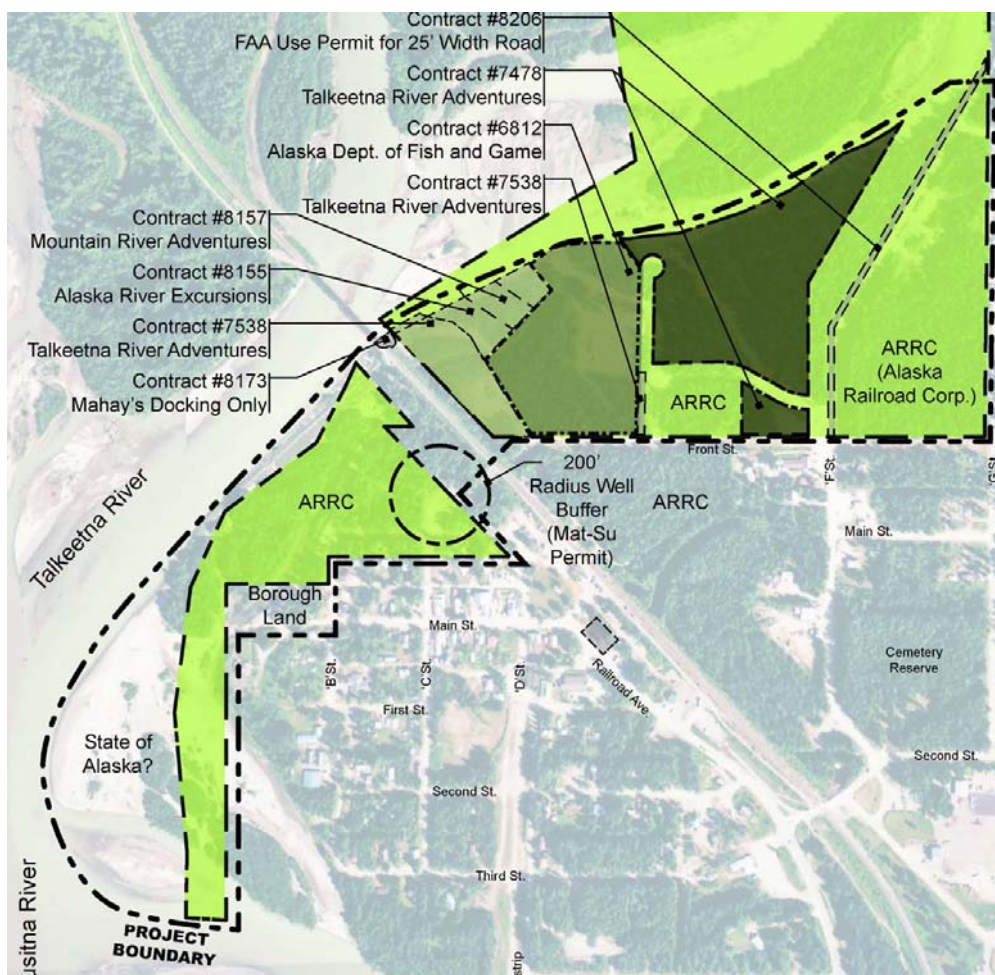
Use of the riverfront area is growing. This plan intends to guide this growth so that the riverfront can bring greater benefits and fewer problems to residents, visitors and landowners. Over the last decade, growth in visitation to Talkeetna has been substantial. Spurred by the opening of two new hotels, the number of visitors to Talkeetna jumped from 20-30,000 people per year in the mid 1990's to nearly 150,000 annually today. Between 1990 and 2000, Talkeetna's population grew about 3.3% per year, twice the growth rate of the state as a whole. Interest in vacation and second homes continues to increase. Talkeetna's abundant private land, accessibility, strategic location and attractive small town character suggest this growth will continue.



# RIVERFRONT PARK PLAN

## PROJECT AREA & LAND OWNERSHIP

The map below shows the boundaries of the area considered by this plan. The planning area straddles the ARRC rail line that crosses Talkeetna. The southern and eastern boundaries generally coincide with the boundaries of the original Talkeetna townsite. Moving from east to west, this boundary follows G Street, Front Street, diagonally crosses the rail line, continues along the former route of Front Street (vacated west of D), and turns south along B Street, west on Main, south on what would have been A Street, and then south along the river. The northern and western boundaries take in the edge of the river, and consequently are shown as extending into the river channel. The southwest corner of the project is set at approximately Third Street. Land use issues in this southern area, e.g., reservation of the popular trail running into Government Lot 9, and use of Government Lot 9 itself, are beyond the scope of this plan. The planning process will consider these issues, however, as it formulates recommendations for the remainder of the planning area.



The Alaska Railroad owns the majority of the land considered in this plan. The State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources owns navigable waterways up to the average high water mark. Where the river boundary is as dynamic as the Talkeetna and Susitna Rivers, this boundary shifts over time. Details of land ownership in the planning area are outlined below:

### **East Side**

ARRC owns all this land but has leased much of the eastern area for several boat launching sites and an associated parking lot. Specific leases are listed below:

- 1-acre permit to FAA for a 25' access road (no fee - public entity)
- 14.6-acre lease for commercial campground, access road and related uses
- 9.3-acre lease to ADF&G for a public boat launch and associated parking lot; ADF&G operates this facility under a concession contract (no fee - public entity)
- Four permits along the Talkeetna River that average about 3/4 of an acre each to river tour and fishing companies, providing space for docking boats and parking

The northern ARRC land boundary in this area meanders with the south side of the Talkeetna River.

### **West Side**

The largely undeveloped area west of the railroad is also primarily in ARRC ownership. Details of land ownership, leases and permits are listed below:

- 4-acre permit to the Mat-Su Borough for a community well (200' radius) and related waterlines corridors (no fee - public entity).
- ARRC has given two non-exclusive permits to raft companies to allow them to cross Railroad land to reach the Susitna River
- 20-Acre permit to MSB for the flood control dike along the Talkeetna River west of the railroad tracks.
- 0.34-acre permit to the Talkeetna Chamber of Commerce west and south of the RR bridge to manage vegetation, trash and control trespass.
- 0.88-Acre permit to MSB for commercial and Chase trail parking lot.
- MSB owns the block of lots immediately north of Main Street, between A and D Streets (a portion of the triangular shaped area traditionally called the river park)
- The ARRC boundary along the Talkeetna & Susitna Rivers varies as the river changes.

Also, the Railroad right of way crosses the project area. The standard width of this right of way is 200 feet and widens to 500 feet in the center of Talkeetna.

The southern extension of the planning area takes in portions of the original Talkeetna townsite where it encounters the river south of Main and west of B Street. This land was at one time in private ownership. The river has changed course and now washes over these lots. Most of these properties are now in Borough ownership.

# RIVERFRONT PARK PLAN

## PLANNING PROCESS

### OVERVIEW

The goal of this planning process is to create a shared vision for the future of the Riverfront Park. While the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) will make the final decision about the future use of the majority of the land, ARRC representatives have committed to working with the community to guide their decisions. This approach is part of ARRC's statewide policy of being responsive to community needs.

The general steps to prepare the Riverfront Plan are outlined below. Underlying this entire process is the intent to understand and incorporate the desires of the many different groups who have a stake in the future of this land (see list at right)

#### 1. Start Up – April 8

Steering Committee meeting April 9, 2003  
Prepare Draft Goals

#### 2. Collect Background Information – April - May 2003

Historical and Existing Use, Land Ownership, Natural Setting, etc.

#### 3. Initial Community Workshops – April 28 & 29, 2003

How is the area used today?  
What are the general goals for future use?  
Steering Committee meeting April 29, 2003

#### 4. Prepare Land Use Plan & Alternatives

Prepare Steering Committee Draft Plan June 30, 2003  
Steering Committee meeting July  
Prepare Public Review Draft Riverfront Plan Aug  
Circulate Draft Plan for community review September

#### 5. Second Community Workshop – September

Steering Committee meeting August  
Community Workshop (one night) September 9, 2003  
Deadline for comments on the draft plan September 17, 2003

#### 6. Final Document: Prepare, Review & Approve

Talkeetna Community Council October 2003  
MSB Parks, Recreation & Trails Advisory Committee December 15, 2004  
MSB Planning Commission December 19, 2004  
MSB Assembly Approval April 6, 2004

#### 7. Implementation – Spring 2004 & Ongoing

## **RIVERFRONT STEERING COMMITTEE**

The Talkeetna Riverfront Plan Steering Committee guides this planning process. Members of this committee are listed below. The Talkeetna Community Council appointed this committee.

Chad Valentine - Committee Co-chair (Chamber of Commerce, President)  
Billy Fitzgerald - Committee Co-chair  
Jok Bondurant  
Jim Kellard  
Suzy Kellard  
Rose Jenne  
Margaret Salmon  
Troy Smiley  
Kathleen Trump  
Ruth Wood (Community Council Chair)

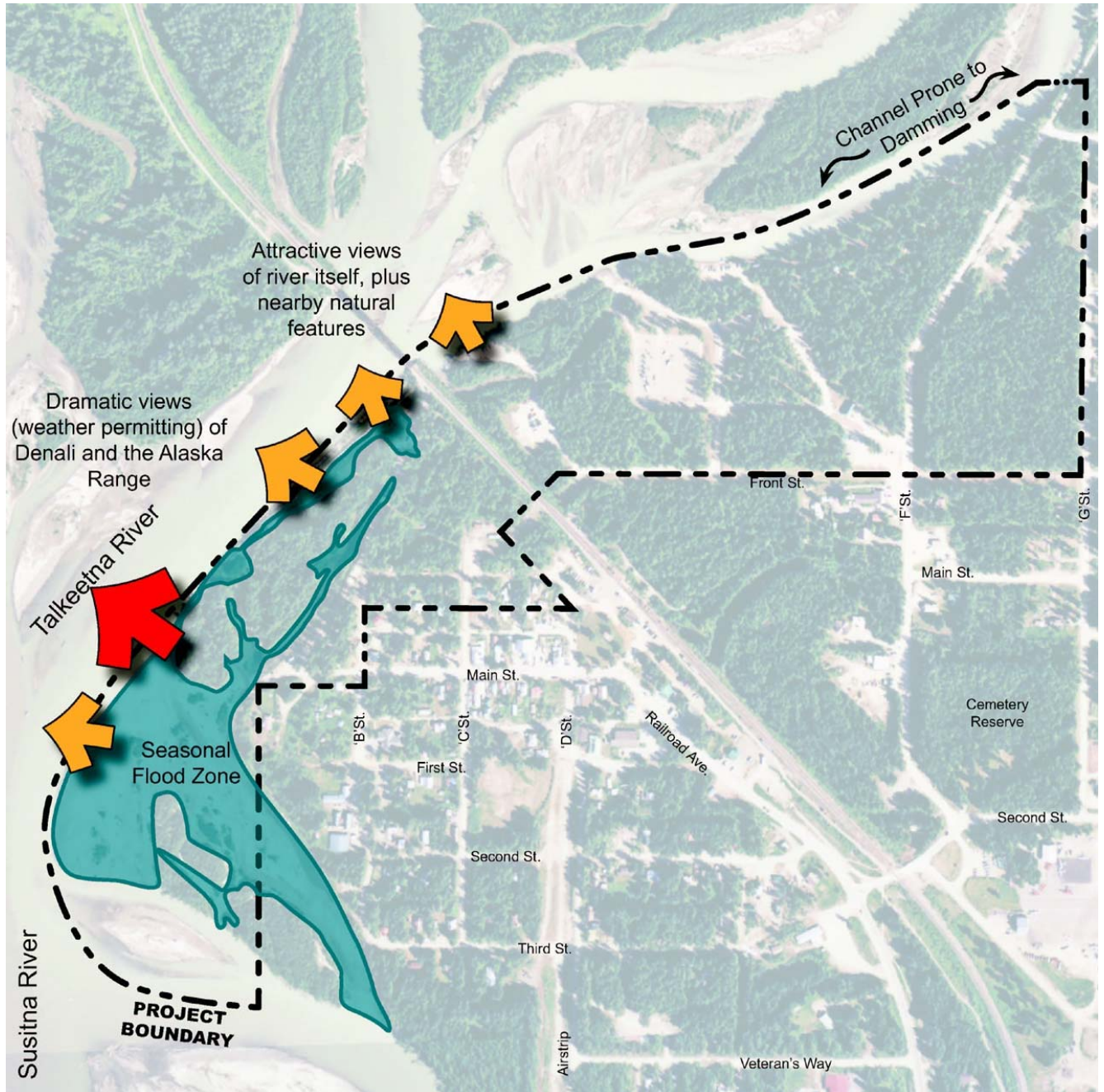
Other individuals and organizations that are actively involved in this project include:

Alaska Railroad Corporation – Tom Brooks, Karen Morrissey  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough – Eileen Probasco, Ron Swanson  
Talkeetna Chamber of Commerce  
Riverfront ARRC Lessees and permit holders  
Local tourism businesses, other local businesses  
Talkeetna Trail Committee  
State of Alaska, Departments of Natural Resources and Fish & Game

Thanks everyone, for all the hard work!

# RIVERFRONT PARK PLAN

## OVERVIEW OF NATURAL FEATURES



## VEGETATION

The project area is forested with second-growth birch, cottonwood and spruce mixed with alder shrub and willow. West of the bridge the growth is quite recent (past 20 years), as old river bars are re-vegetated. Vegetation east of the bridge is more established and less dense.

## WILDLIFE AND BIRDS

During a critical three-week period – roughly the last week of April through the second week of May-- hundreds of migratory waterfowl pause in their migrations to rest and feed along the riverfront. Over 75 varieties of birds have been spotted here, including waterfowl such as the loon, grebe, swan, goose, duck, merganser, gull, tern and sandpiper. Birds of prey spotted in the area include the eagle, hawk, harrier, merlin and owl. Songbirds include the robin, sparrow, warbler, water thrush, longspur, kingfisher, flicker, woodpecker, lark, chickadee and redpoll. Magpies and ravens make their presence known here as well. Wildlife spotted in the area includes moose, bear, and others. Rainbow trout, Dolly Varden, grayling, whitefish and burbot are resident species of both the Talkeetna and Susitna Rivers. Each summer, a significant salmon run comes up the river with king and red salmon in June and July and silver salmon from mid-July to mid-September.

## FLOODING

This plan considers property located at the confluence of the Talkeetna and Susitna Rivers. The water level of these rivers fluctuates greatly throughout the year. A number of sloughs cut through the area, filling with water as the river rises. In general, the water level is highest in late spring and early summer, and drops in the fall. However, the pattern is unpredictable: the river bar can be dry for much of spring and early summer (as it was in early summer) or flooded (as it was during the middle of summer). When the water level is highest, the large channel that runs along the western edge of town is full and access to the 'beach' is cut off. This channel is flanked by a revetment to protect the community in times of high water and flooding. In addition, a rip-rap dike runs along the shoreline just west of the railroad bridge.

The largest recorded flood in this area occurred in September 1942 in which the Talkeetna River rose six feet, flooding homes and businesses in the community. Other more recent floods have occurred in August 1971 and October 1986. Water was also high during the preparation of this plan, in summer of 2003.

## SUMMARY OF SPECIAL NATURAL FEATURES

- Views – see symbols on map
- Proximity of attractive, largely natural waterfront to community
- Clean, wild river
- Birds – migration stop in spring



# RIVERFRONT PARK PLAN

## **EXISTING USE & ISSUES**

### *"WHAT WE HEARD FROM YOU"*

At the April workshops, participants responded to these questions:

- 1. How do you use this area today?*
- 2. What is special about this area?*
- 3. What are key problems in the area?*
- 4. What solutions do you recommend to solve these problems?*

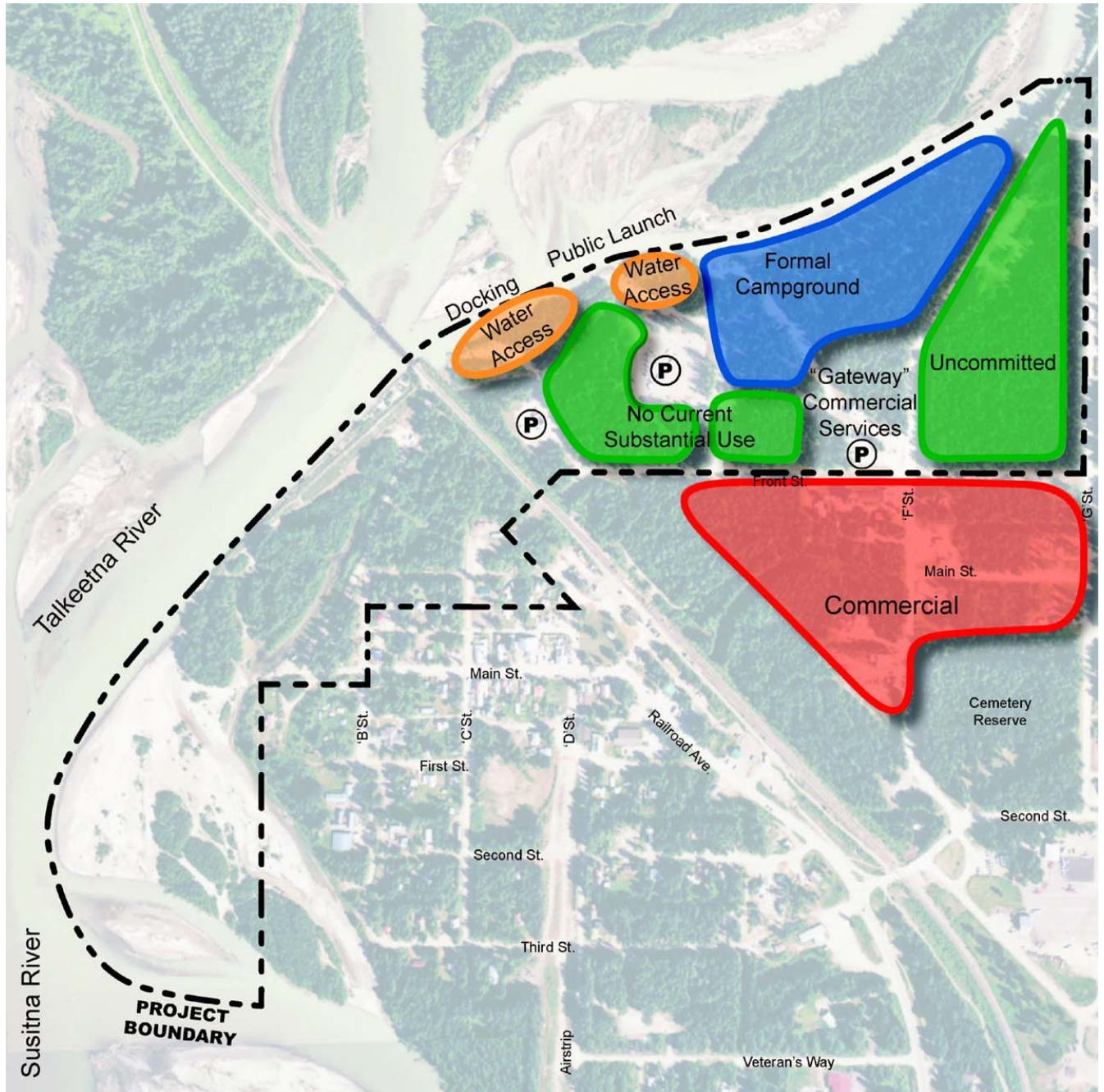
Responses are summarized below and divided between the East and West side of the bridge. These maps provide a picture of the major uses on the site and on adjoining lands.



# RIVERFRONT PARK PLAN

## EXISTING USE & ISSUES - "WHAT WE HEARD FROM YOU"

### EAST SIDE



## EAST SIDE USE & ISSUES

### 1. How do you use this area today?

*Winter Activities* Skiing, snowmachining, walking, dog mushing, snowshoeing, sledding

*Summer Activities – commercial* Boat launch, RVs, horseback riding, commercial boat operating, tourism, camping sites (approximately 75 spaces)

*Summer Activities – non-commercial* Four-wheeling, fishing, pick up trash, walking, hiking, berry picking, "some locals don't use at all"

*Overall character of Use:*

More structured/commercial than west side

More motorized use than west side

### 2. What is special about this area?

*Access* Casual walking for adjoining residents, access to bird-watching points and other points north, trail links to backcountry and fishing (popular, beautiful)

*Passage* Locals pass through on FAA road to East Talkeetna (as courtesy to residents)

*Concentrates commercial / motorized-use* Tourism and high-volume activities (RV camping, boat launch, tours)

*Natural, wooded character* Serves as a nice buffer between river and town; quiet, solitude in off-season; area of low development near town

### 3. What are key problems in the area?

*Development* This is the first area of commercial development on river

*Unpredictable river* Channel flow moving toward bank, flood issues, lack of water in slough (clogging upstream), danger from railroad cars used as rip-rap dislodged by river flow

*Squatters at end of FAA road* Problems include noise, trash, vandalism, illegal alcohol & drug use, attracts bears, theft, lack of law enforcement

*Uncertain future* Because of railroad permit process and possible dikes

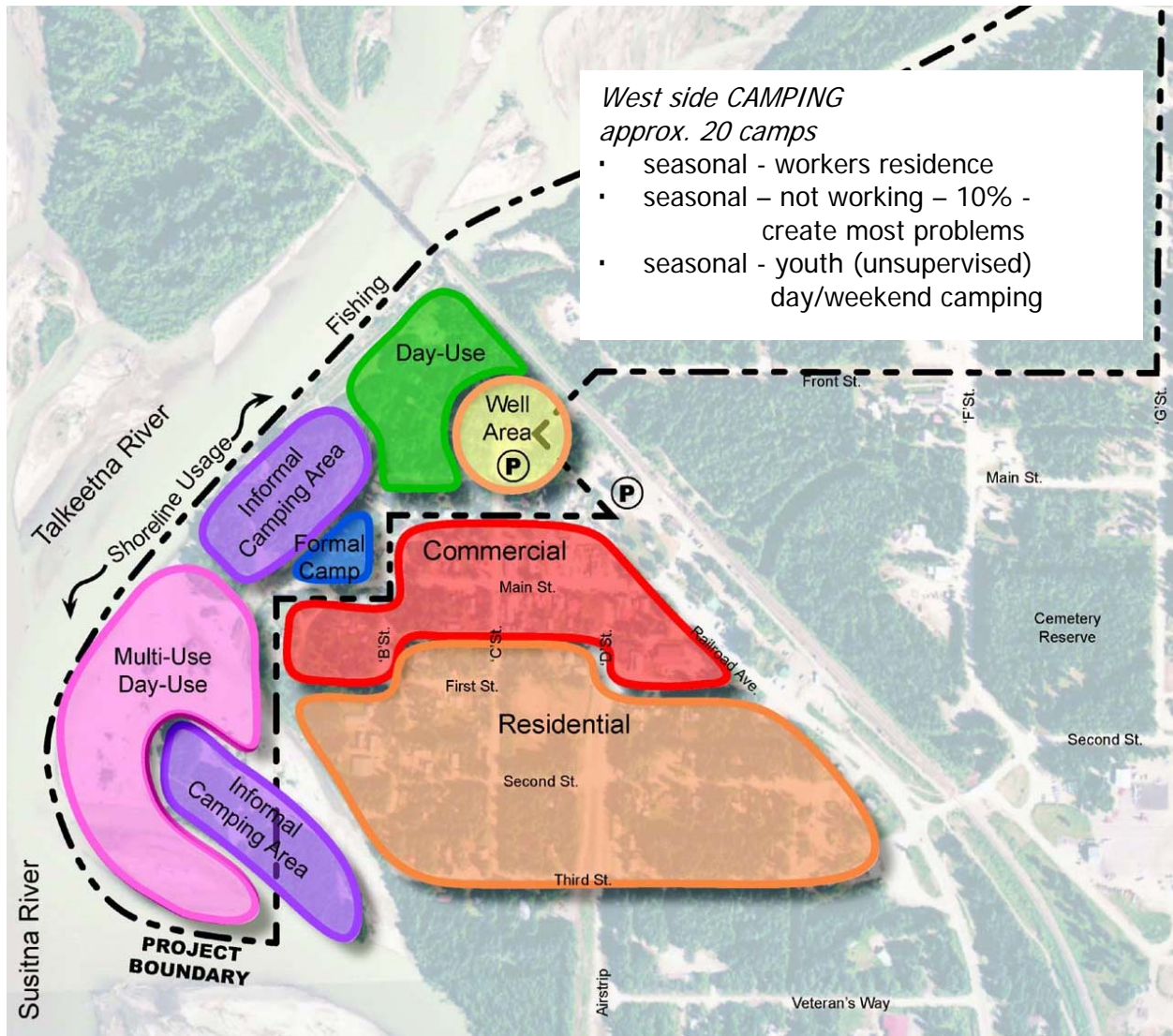
*Facilities Needed* Expanded parking and camping for RV's and tents

### 4. What solutions do you recommend to solve these problems?

*Development* Provide summer camping at low cost for seasonal employees, expand parking, expand existing camping (tent and RV)

# RIVERFRONT PARK PLAN – WEST SIDE

## EXISTING USE & ISSUES “WHAT WE HEARD FROM YOU”



### 1. How do you use this area today?

*Year-round activities* Rock-throwing, bird & wildlife watching, view of mountains and river, migratory bird stop, walking, dog-walking, meditation, contemplation, reading, painting, stargazing, partying, kid's play, horseback riding, four-wheeling, place to send tourists, hunting, shooting, festivals & ceremonies, fishing, access to Chase trail, picking up trash, vehicles driving / parking, building forts in woods, fireworks, bonfires / BBQ, bocce ball

*Summer activities* Camping, picnics, playing in river, sun-bathing, swim in slough, raft take-out

*Designated / Commercial activities* Raft take-out, community well, Chase, Railroad parking

*Winter activities* skiing, ice skating, snowshoeing, dog mushing, snowmachining

## 2. What is special about this area?

*Natural Beauty* Outstanding views, warm, clean, wild river, breeze (no bugs), wildlife habitat, water system ecology, undeveloped paradise – “nothing manmade”, quiet (fall-spring), migratory bird landing (April-May) for bird watching, open landscape, seasonal changes

*Access* “Like being at the beach – you can step out of busy town into open space”, easy access to river, public, important to all, gathering place, close to downtown (one of few, easily accessible public areas for kids to play away from town traffic)

*Historical Use* Long history of use (Alaska Native, pioneer communities), meeting place, river crossing, confluence

## 3. What are key problems in the area?

*Motorized traffic (snowmachines, motorcycles, ATVs)* Tears-up terrain, noisy, unsafe, abuse of privilege, conflicts with camping, snowmobiles on river (disturb migrating birds), threats to wildlife & bird habitat

*Trash / pollution* Oil, cars, batteries, tires, camping litter, abandoned campsites, glass

*Parties / long-term transient camping* Disrespectful, noisy, unmanaged, trash (human sanitation, camp litter), alcohol & drugs, firearms, irresponsible, unsafe, makes place uncomfortable for others to enjoy, wildfire danger from campfires, bear attraction, camping area degraded

*Lack of planned use* Difficult access, hazards (trenches), no clear trails, rock pile, lack of signage, no organized parking, no turn-around for main street traffic, congestion, need pedestrian access other than proposed turn-around

*Conflicting uses* Private use displaces public

*Opportunity to protect natural habitat* Maintain natural integrity while continuing existing uses

*Erosion* River boats cause erosion on dike, big boats, horse rides (damage to trails, manure, frighten wildlife), and river flow

## 4. What solutions do you recommend to solve these problems?

*Clarify priorities for use* Weigh value of uses (designate use for area)

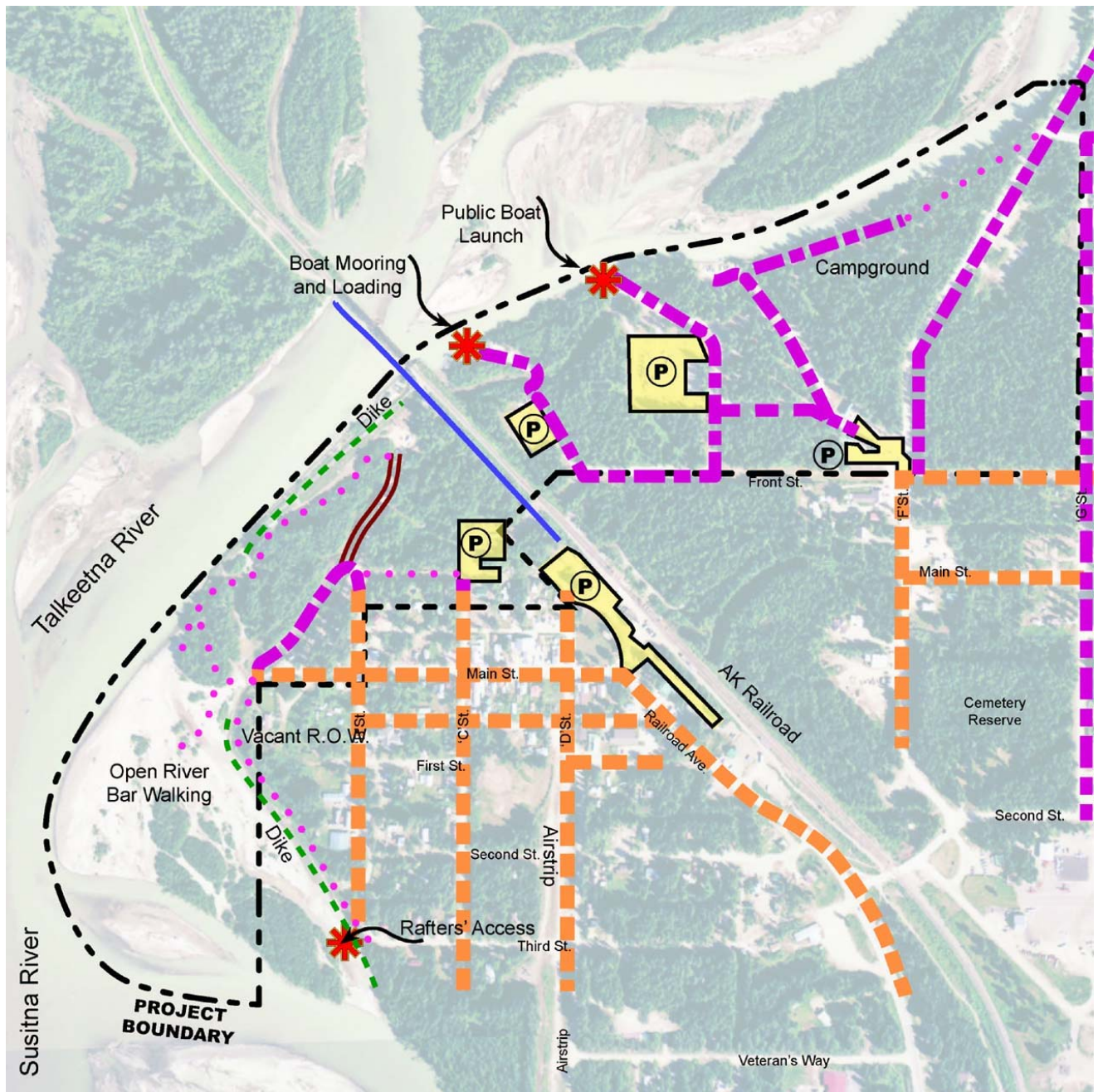
*Improve Access* Create access corridor to water, create pedestrian crossing under railroad tracks (tunnel and path under bridge?)

*Enforcement & Maintenance* Develop system and generate funding

*Relocate seasonal residential campers* Develop camping facilities (i.e. toilets, water, trash removal) [move to East side?], cooperative agreement?, ask or require employers to provide camping for employees, ask for assistance from Chamber of Commerce

# RIVERFRONT PARK PLAN

## CIRCULATION



This map shows existing trails, service drives, roads, parking areas, and related features. Notes on these circulation elements are presented below:



## ROADS

*East Side:* Dirt roads provide access from the 'gateway' parking area to boat launches along the river and to the campground. A 25' access road leased to the FAA and is also used by local residents to access points further east.

*West Side:* A road encircling the 'river park triangle' provides a place for downtown traffic to turn around.



**ACCESS "UP THE TRACKS"** An informal trail leads across the railroad bridge providing access to points across the river.



**FLOOD CONTROL** Rip-rap dike



**INFORMAL, YEAR-ROUND TRAIL** Mostly non-motorized with some motorized (4-wheeler, snowmachine)



**WINTER TRAIL** Winter trail (skiing, snowshoeing, walking, light snow-machining). Used to be year-round trail before commercial leases.



**SERVICE DRIVE** This drive allows access to the pile of rip-rap reserved for dike repairs and to the cleared area at the end of the drive next to the railroad tracks.



## WATER ACCESS

*East side:* Two main boat launches include: the private launch to the west (used primarily for commercial tour operations), and the public boat launch to the east (built by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game). There are other boat private launches upstream that are used when the channel is full.

*West side:* Most commercial and private rafters enter the riverfront area here. Access to the water from this point varies according to water level.



## PARKING

*East side:* There is a large parking area on the property leased to the Alaska Department of Fish & Game that is used primarily by people launching boats nearby. The two smaller parking lots are on land leased to Talkeetna River Adventures and used primarily by patrons to TRA tours.

*West side:* Formal parking along the tracks contains space for 66 vehicles; railroad employees and visitors primarily use this lot. There is informal space for about 25 vehicles to park around the community well, currently primarily used by Chase residents.

# RIVERFRONT PARK PLAN

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents recommendations for addressing the major issues associated with the Riverfront Park. Riverfront Park goals, listed below, are the starting point for the land use policies presented on the pages that follow. The goals, issues and policies came from discussions with the Riverfront Plan Steering Committee, two Community Workshops, ARRC, and other community contacts. For most topics there was broad agreement on the best way to proceed. On the several issues where opinions were more varied, this section outlines and evaluates alternative strategies, and selects the approach ultimately approved by the community.

### 1. RIVERFRONT PARK GOALS

#### **SUSTAIN RESIDENT RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER:**

- An 'out-the-door', mostly natural, generally quiet place for residents to go for a walk, to enjoy the river and views, to picnic, fish or see wildlife
- A valuable natural counterpoint to the shops, homes and other development within the Talkeetna townsite

#### **WHERE APPROPRIATE, PROVIDE NEW ACTIVITY AREAS FOR VISITORS & CONTRIBUTE TO LOCAL ECONOMY:**

- Open space, trails, picnic areas, viewpoints, and other non-commercial natural attractions
- Commercial recreational uses such as boat launching, parking or camping
- A careful balance between improvements that make Talkeetna a more attractive place to visit, and strategies to maintain the existing natural character of the park

#### **MAINTAIN ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY:**

- Natural, largely undeveloped character; a place to see and enjoy natural phenomena such as changes in river flow, birds and other wildlife. Opportunity for limited improvements to meet other goals outlined here, including responding to flood and other environmental issues

## **ACKNOWLEDGE THE MISSION OF THE PRIMARY LANDOWNER – THE ALASKA RAILROAD CORPORATION:**

- Maintenance of railroad operations and related functions
- Opportunities to generate revenue from ARRC land holdings
- Support for community preferences
- Support for the role the Riverfront Park plays in making Talkeetna an attractive destination

## **ACKNOWLEDGE INTERESTS OF OTHER LANDOWNERS AND LEASE & PERMIT HOLDERS**

- Support for uses and activities allowed under current leases & permits
- Cooperate to achieve Riverfront goals

## **IMPROVE COMMUNITY CIRCULATION**

- Make improvements consistent with the trails, parking, and vehicular circulation strategies in the Comprehensive Plan and Community/Tourism Plan

## **GENERATE REVENUES FOR LOCAL SERVICES**

- Recognize that Talkeetna, as an unincorporated community, faces real challenges in raising funds to provide local services. Encourage some Riverfront Park uses that generate revenues that can be plowed back into community services, such as park and trail maintenance. Aim to create a self-supporting park.



## RIVERFRONT PARK PLAN

# 2. RIVERFRONT PARK LAND USE

This section presents recommendations for land use. It is organized as outlined below. These recommendations, like the goals, build from the recommendations of the steering committee, the community workshops, the ARRC and other discussions with parties with a stake in the future use of this area.

### SUMMARY OF ISSUES

#### *ISSUES FOR THE WHOLE RIVERFRONT PARK*

1. Employee Camping/Housing

#### *WEST SIDE ISSUES*

2. Day Use Areas
3. Visitor Campground
4. Gateway & Parking
5. Vehicular Use Within the Park
6. Trails
7. River Park Triangle
8. Commercial Development

#### *EAST SIDE ISSUES*

9. Day Use Areas
10. Trails
11. Unleased Lands
12. Infrastructure

# ***ISSUES FOR THE WHOLE RIVERFRONT PARK***

## **1A. EMPLOYEE CAMPING/HOUSING**

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### **A. BACKGROUND:**

Existing unregulated, trespass camping within the Riverfront Park area frequently creates problems with trash, sanitation, abandoned debris, and displacement of resident and visitor day use. At the same time, seasonal employees need a place to stay. The situation is complicated by the presence of campers who are not employees but merely transients spending time in Talkeetna. Workshop participants and Steering Committee members agree that visitor and employee camping are not a good mix.

### **B. ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS**

Option 1 (APPROVED): encourage/require larger businesses to provide for housing for their own employees. Businesses could do this on private land, or perhaps on land leased from ARRC.

Option 2: identify and reserve a community employee camping area.

Possible sites include: ARRC land just east of the proposed visitor camping area; ARRC land east of the railroad (near the FAA road, or immediately adjoining the railroad)

### **C. EVALUATION AND APPROVED STRATEGY**

Most Talkeetna employers, and most employers with seasonal tourism employees in other small Alaskan communities, already arrange for their employees lodging (see Appendix 1 for details). In small towns like Talkeetna, larger employers have an interest, and the community believes should have the responsibility, to help house their seasonal employees. Having each employer take this responsibility leads to employee housing being dispersed in different locations and reduces problems that come from large groups of employees camping in one area. The Community Council, Chamber of Commerce and other community representatives will work with Talkeetna employers to carry out this policy.

## **1B. SIGNAGE**

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### **A. BACKGROUND:**

Continued growth in tourism and recreation use has set the stage for Talkeetna to regulate previously unregulated activities including camping, parking and ATV use. A system of signs is required so everybody understands the rules. Signs should be designed to clear and easily read; at the same time, signs need to fit with and complement the character of the community. A standardized graphic style needs to be developed so signs are attractive, consistent in visual character, and sized to be visible but not intrusive.

### **B. APPROVED POLICY**

#### Key signs needed

- Sign at Spur Road/Main St. (intro to town and parking) "Main Street Parking, Riverfront Park Access, Walk-In Campground"
- Sign at newly refurbished parking lot trail head "Riverfront Park Access Trail; Chase Permit & Walk-In Campground Parking " – include map
- Sign at triangle on Main Street, and at north end of triangle rip rap trail gate "Riverfront Park Access – no motorized vehicles, no camping except in designated camping area with a permit" – include map
- Sign at campground host gate – "Riverfront Park Walk In Campground - \$10/night, Check in with Campground Host" – include map
- Interpretive Signs – add a set of unobtrusive interpretive signs, keyed to a town guide and map, so that visitors can learn about the area's cultural and natural history. These signs could include a reference, allowing visitors to get basic information from the sign and more details from an associated town guide.

## **1C. NEW PARK FACILITIES**

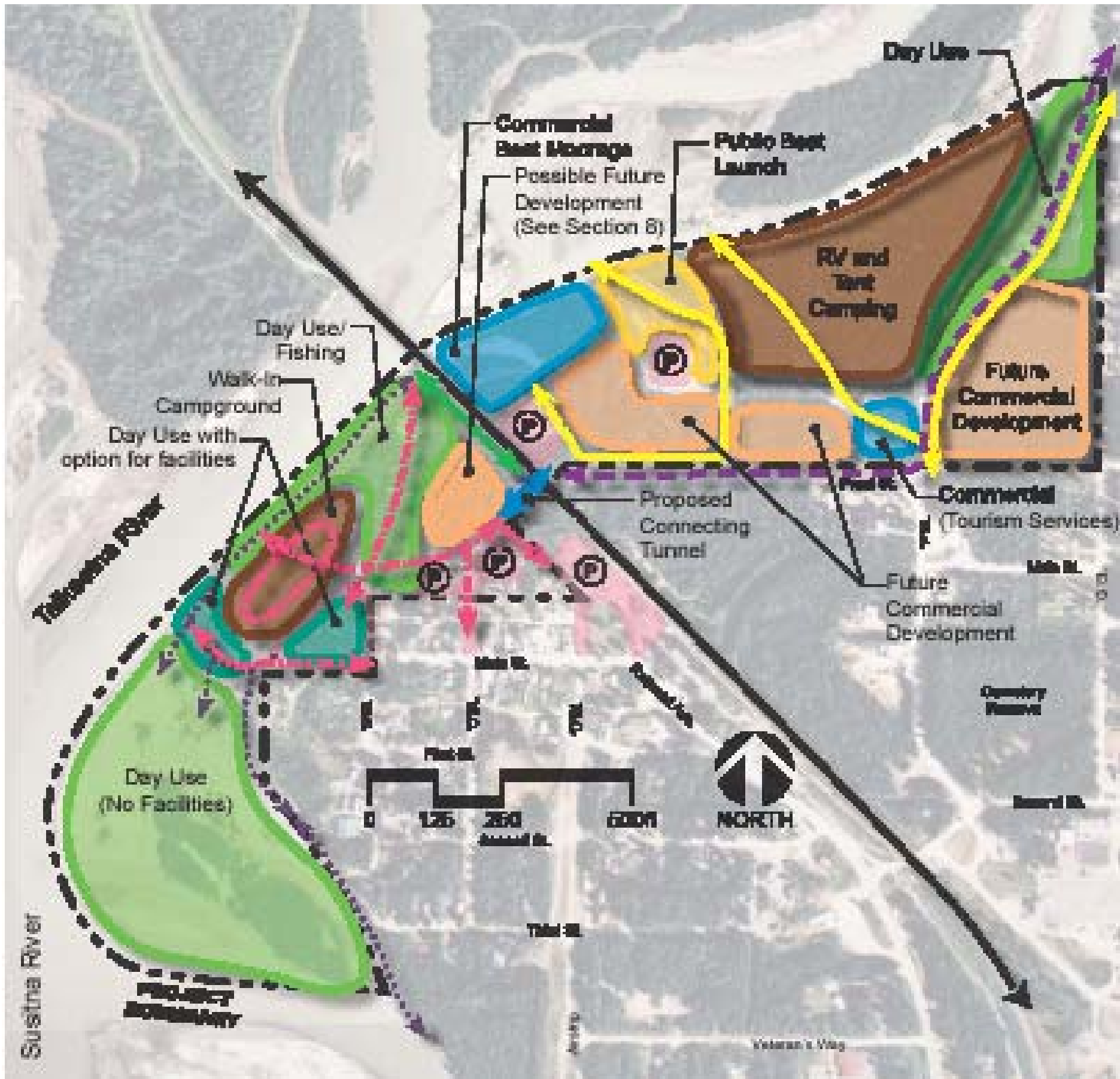
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### **A. BACKGROUND:**

Final details of the man-made structures called for in this plan will need to be worked out during implementation. Several general guidelines for this process are given below:

- Use local designs and materials, to better match and bring out Talkeetna's unique character, and take advantage of skilled local crafts people
- Use non-toxic materials
- Design camping and day use facilities to be minimally impacted by occasional flooding, for example, by anchoring tent platforms and tables to the ground.

**RIVERFRONT PARK PLAN  
FUTURE LAND USE & CIRCULATION**



**WEST SIDE**

- Major park access trails
- Secondary trails
- Chase motorized access

**EAST SIDE**

- Winter trail (may read as purple on map)
- Vehicular access roads
- Proposed day-use trails (see section 10)

# **WEST SIDE ISSUES**

## **2. DAY USE AREAS (STROLLING, FISHING, PICNIC, ETC.)**

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### **A. BACKGROUND**

Based on input to date there is little need or desire for day use facilities. For most users, access to the natural environment is the attraction.

### **B. APPROVED POLICY**

The majority of the west side will continue to be used for day use recreation without day use facilities. Some facilities are recommended, however, as outlined below:

- Locate several (3-5) locally-made picnic tables at the riverfront “day use area with option for facilities” as shown in plan map
- Provide trash cans (requires regular maintenance – see implementation section)
- Restrooms – provide at least one, to be used jointly by west side campers and day users, If funding is available provide two: at campsite (1<sup>st</sup> priority) and in the triangle (2<sup>nd</sup> priority). A final decision on the location of restroom facilities will require consideration of cost and flood issues.
- Picnic Shelter - Provide option for a locally made picnic shelter, primarily for community events, in the triangle area of the park. The final decision about whether to have this facility, and its specific design, will require further community review.
- North side day use Day Use Facilities (near rip-rap rock pile) Retain the option for future day use facilities, such as interpretation, trash cans, possibly small shelter. A fish cleaning station is not an appropriate use here. The final decision about whether to have these facilities, and their specific design, and impacts on flood management will require further community review.

## **3. VISITOR CAMPGROUND**

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*“Since I moved here 10 years ago the area has been used as a campground. The railroad has only begun to enforce rules in the past 2 years. Now, there are problems in the area that need to be addressed - camping is not the new introduction with this plan, the organized management of camping is.”*

### **A. BACKGROUND**

This area has traditionally been used for camping by employees and visitors. Historically this area has been a place for people to camp – it was a native fish camp prior to white settlement. Then, when the railroad was built, the area was cleared for a campground by the railroad (1910-15).

### **B. APPROVED POLICY**

Create a developed camping area for visitors in the area north of the existing ‘River Park’ triangle (see map). The campground will be designed to be compatible with

day-use by visitors and local residents (e.g. so all will feel comfortable passing through). It was noted at the steering committee meetings that Homer, Seward and Valdez all have large visitor camping areas in town that do not block a comfortable community life and pattern.

Specific elements and features of the campground should include:

- Provide 25 spaces, each occupying approximately 20x30 ft. Provide enough separation (about 80 feet) for a vegetative buffer between each campsite.
- Manage as a walk-in camping area, linked by a good path to nearby parking. Rely on the east side of Riverfront Park for drive-in camping.
- Each campsite will have a picnic table, fire pit and a cleared, well drained space for a tent.
- Use a campground host (see notes in implementation section for details).
- Develop a reservation system. Post information at edge of town to minimize unnecessary driving. Provide trash collection, restrooms, & carts. Charge a fee to cover costs.
- Pathways in the vicinity of the campground:
  - a. Access route linking camping area with parking
  - b. Continuation of this trail route through campground to the river trail, so campground doesn't block access from downtown to the water.
  - c. Small circular road that provides access to each site that is comfortable for casual strolling (like typical US Forest Service campgrounds)
  - d. Trail parallel to river
- ♦ Prohibit camping in other parts of the riverfront area, including areas historically used for camping, such as the sand bar south of Main Street (see notes in implementation section for details).
- ♦ Structure the management of the whole Riverfront Park to generate revenue to cover costs of ongoing management of campground, parking and day-use areas (see implementation chapter for details).

Establish criteria for evaluating the success of the park. Camping in this area, like the plans to provide more formalized day-use, is an experiment. It was noted at the public workshops that a campground will be easy to reclaim for a different purpose if it doesn't work. The community will evaluate the success of these programs over the next 5-10 years. Criteria for this evaluation include:

- Impact on day-use area
- Volume of campers and users fits capacity of facilities
- Extent of litter, illegal activities, noise
- Revenue exceeds or balances with operational costs (for the whole park, i.e., parking and camping combined)

If these criteria are not met, the community may need to modify programs (e.g. more or less camping). Alternatively, if associated problems with the new campground arise that appear impossible to solve, camping could be eliminated, and this area used for non-commercial day recreation activities.

#### 4. RIVERFRONT PARK "GATEWAY" AND PARKING

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*"The goal of this plan is not to maximize the throughput of people – it is to maintain the character of the place. People like to walk – it means more when you get there."*

##### A. BACKGROUND

Downtown Talkeetna is already crowded with activity, people and structures. Pressures continue to grow for additional development. Parking is high on this list of pressures, including parking for town and riverfront park visitors, for people who work on the railroad, visitors taking Railroad excursions, and people with weekend or year round cabins up the Chase trail. The main challenge for the Riverfront Plan is balancing these needs against the desire to retain the Riverfront for open space and recreation.

This plan's response to this challenge is the assumption that, over the long term, Riverfront land will be most valuable if it is largely used for open space and recreation. Parking, for example, can be located in a number of locations around the community, but the presence of this natural area between the town and the river is unique. Therefore, this plan will not attempt to meet all of the potential demands focused on the riverfront area. Instead the plan recommends making a modest contribution to these needs, for example, making some improvements to parking for Chase residents. Likewise the plan recommends a phased approach, for example starting with limited amounts of parking, and then later evaluating if more is needed. Meeting all these parking and other demands will require use of land outside the Riverfront area, primarily east of the railroad.

Based on this approach, the table below shows goals for different types of parking. Current planning assumes most park users are already coming to see Talkeetna and that the Riverfront Park will not create additional visitation growth. To the maximum degree possible, people will be encouraged to walk to the park, although, some park-related parking will still be needed.

<i>User Group</i>	<i>Spaces</i>
Railroad Employees – continue to park in existing area	
*Chase community parking	25-30
Day use Riverfront visitors, residents (stroll, fish, sightsee, picnic)	15
Overnight visitor campers (based on 25 sites)	15-20
<i>Total</i>	55-65

\*Residents of the Chase community identified four categories of Chase parking needs: 1) 2<sup>nd</sup> home recreational cabin; 2) permanent, year round (using trailer and ATV); 3) permanent year-round (using Bud Car, runs on Thursdays, currently park along edge of fiber optics building); and 4) day use.

## B. ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS - LOCATIONS OF PARKING AND A MAIN GATEWAY TO THE RIVERFRONT PARK (Options described below and mapped on page 35)

Option 1 (APPROVED): Most park visitors enter the park on foot, walking into the park at the west end of town. Focus vehicular access for the Riverfront Park to the east end of Main Street – the same area used by all categories of visitors to downtown Talkeetna.

Option 2: Use the existing service road extending north from B Street. This route, currently closed off to vehicles, leads to the rip rap rock pile at the RR river bridge. Provide parking along this route and at the end of the road near the existing cleared area.

Option 3: Direct cars into the railroad parking lot, then onto a new road parallel to the railroad leading north to the rip rap rock pile parking lot.

## C. EVALUATION AND APPROVED POLICY

Over the course of the planning process, different views were expressed on the best location for parking and vehicles, but ultimately the large majority of people supported Option 1. Option 1 is preferred for several reasons: this option a) “captures” vehicles on the east side of town and thereby helps reduce traffic on Main Street, b) avoids directing vehicles into the center of the Riverfront Park c) the parking provides easy access both to downtown and the park, and d) with a good trail, it brings users within an easy walk of fishing areas, the campground, and other park attractions. Option 2 has the benefit of using an existing service road rather than clearing a new area, and ensuring users do not have too far to walk. However, the parking that results in this option is located at the end of long dead end road, and doesn’t serve downtown. Option 3 is generally seen as undesirable because, while capturing traffic on the east side of town, it requires construction of new road.

### *Specific Parking and Gateway Policies:*

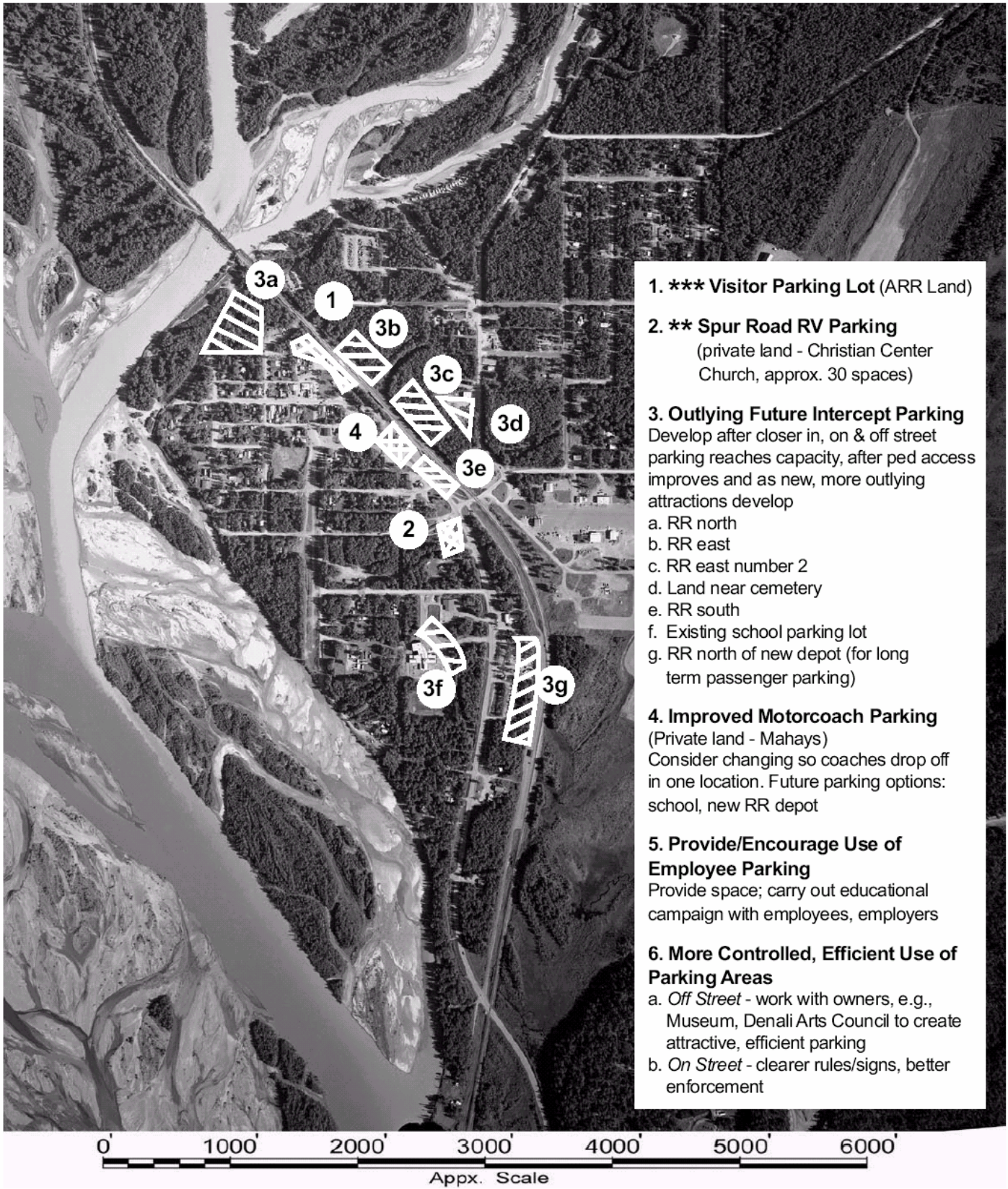
- Provide multiple pedestrian access points into the park. Pedestrian entry points include the west end of Main Street, and the trail linking the well parking lot/C Street and the east side town parking lot/D Street, the revetment trail coming up from Gov’t Lot 9, and the gated entry at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street.
- Direct park day-users who come by car to the east side “town” parking lot.
- Use a series of parking ‘pods’, starting with the refurbished railroad parking lot, proceeding west to a (refurbished) well parking area, and then to a new camping parking area, restricted to use by overnight campers.
- Connect the parking lots with a small road, so nearly all visitors will come into the parking areas from the Spur Road without using Main Street. Also keep open the existing road into the well lot from C St. This linkage is needed as a secondary point of access/egress, and fire safety and emergency access but



should not be an inviting throughway. Need to ask businesses along C Street to park large vehicles and buses elsewhere.

- Restrict parking at the well lot to use by Chase Trail residents. Refurbish this existing parking area, creating 25-30 parking spaces. Use the area for a combination of year and shorter term (e.g., weekend or overnight) parking. Design the lot to accommodate more vehicles/trailers.
- Guide people to these parking lots with clear signs; provide signs and trails to connect people from these parking areas into the park. Direct traffic in from the Main Street-Spur Road intersection.
- Also provide some incidental park user parking on the street that surrounds the west Main Street "turn-around triangle." Provide parallel parking on one side of this road (requires lease from ARRC). Do not promote or provide signage directing users to parking in this area.
- Charge a fee for parking in the three main parking lots – use the revenues to cover lot maintenance and to help cover overall costs of managing the riverfront park area. (See implementation section for details)
- Monitor use of lots. If lots are underutilized, consider changing restrictions e.g. opening up well lot to visitors.
- Retain existing and add new vegetation to camouflage parking.
- Retain a buffer between the parking lots/access roads and land owners to the south to minimize sights and sounds of parking. This buffer needs to be at least 25 feet wide, and preferably 50 feet.
- Link the parking lots with an easy trail leading into the park to the west and north. Eventually, extend this trail east under the railroad.
- Note: The borough and DEC permit parking within the 200' radius of the well; sewer lines within this boundary are prohibited.
- Work actively to create additional parking in other parts of Talkeetna, including, once a tunnel is built, the east side of Talkeetna. Options for parking are shown in the map on the opposite page, on a map taken from the approved Community Tourism plan. Options in addition to East Talkeetna, include sites south along the Spur Road, and the new RR depot. If this last option is pursued, the depot could be a place for bud car to stop and parking for Chase residents. The ARRC right of way in this area is narrow and so parking around the depot is limited.

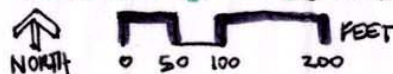
Talkeetna Community/ Tourism Plan  
**Solutions: Parking Issues**



- 1. \*\*\* Visitor Parking Lot (ARR Land)**
- 2. \*\* Spur Road RV Parking**  
(private land - Christian Center Church, approx. 30 spaces)
- 3. Outlying Future Intercept Parking**  
Develop after closer in, on & off street parking reaches capacity, after ped access improves and as new, more outlying attractions develop
  - a. RR north
  - b. RR east
  - c. RR east number 2
  - d. Land near cemetery
  - e. RR south
  - f. Existing school parking lot
  - g. RR north of new depot (for long term passenger parking)
- 4. Improved Motorcoach Parking**  
(Private land - Mahays)  
Consider changing so coaches drop off in one location. Future parking options: school, new RR depot
- 5. Provide/Encourage Use of Employee Parking**  
Provide space; carry out educational campaign with employees, employers
- 6. More Controlled, Efficient Use of Parking Areas**
  - a. *Off Street* - work with owners, e.g., Museum, Denali Arts Council to create attractive, efficient parking
  - b. *On Street* - clearer rules/signs, better enforcement

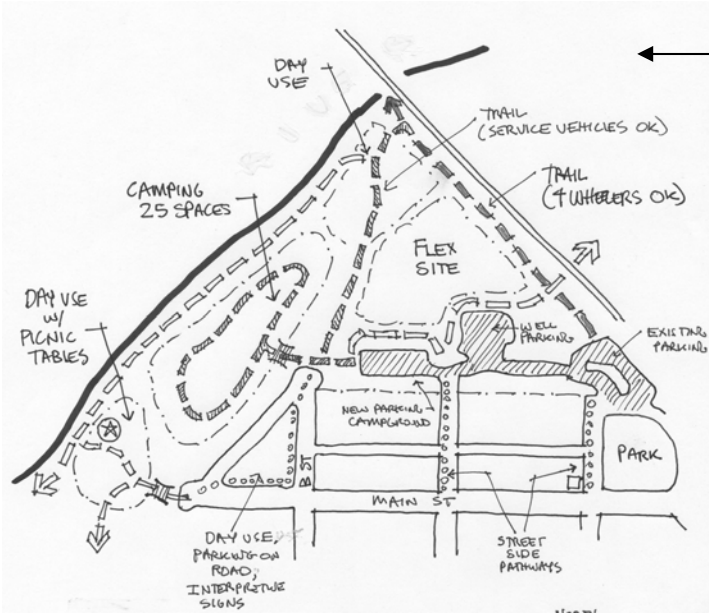


**TALKEETNA RIVERFRONT PARK SITE CONCEPT**  
 SEPT 2003  
 AGNEW:BECK • LDN



RIVERFRONT PLAN

**"GATEWAY" AND PARKING OPTIONS** (See previous text for discussion)



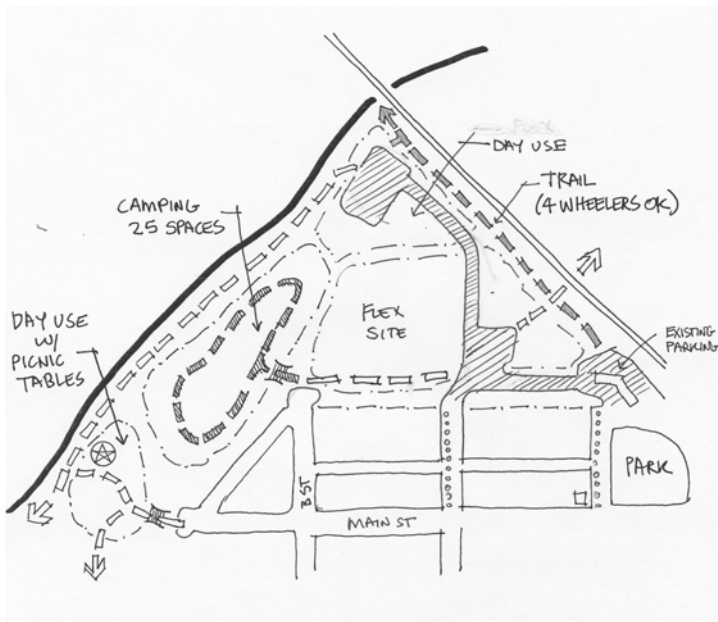
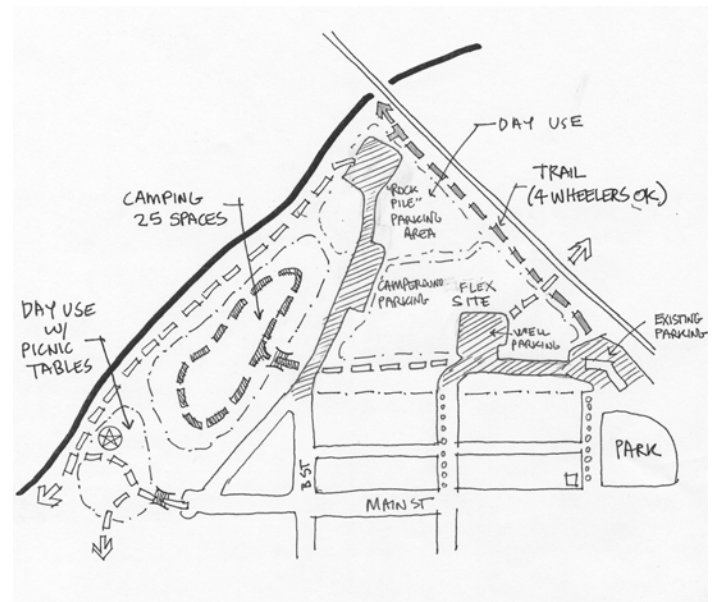
**OPTION 1 – EAST SIDE ENTRY (APPROVED)**

- Series of Parking Pods (2 refurbished, 1 new)
- Traffic Captured on East side of Main Street
- Parking serves both downtown and park

"Turnaround Triangle" serves as secondary entry and parking area (for all three alternatives)

**OPTION 2 - B Street Entry**

- Uses existing informal dirt road leading to rip rap rock pile
- Creates largest amount of parking
- Traffic directed to West side of Main Street
- Provides vehicle access into heart of park



**OPTION 3 – Hybrid**

- Creates new road leading to rip rap rock pile
- Traffic captured on east side of Main Street
- Provides vehicle access into east side of park

## 5. VEHICULAR USE WITHIN THE PARK

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### A. BACKGROUND

Low level motorized use of the Riverfront Park has gone on over the years, including use by four wheelers, snow machines and vehicles. Recently there have been increasing efforts to keep vehicles out of the area, due to concerns about impacts of motorized use and users on character, safety and wildlife. Based on the workshops associated with this plan, restrictions on motorized use have strong support.

### B. APPROVED POLICY

*Summer Use:* Motorized summer recreation is prohibited in the park. Achieving this goal will require a range of actions including education, physically blocking access, and active enforcement. Certain motorized activities should, however, be allowed, as outlined below:

- Service vehicle access to rip-rap pile (rock pile) for flood control purposes
- 4 wheelers, snowmachines on the Chase trail leading to the railroad bridge
- Service vehicles emptying trash, servicing campground
- Commercial rafting companies who use 4-wheelers to tow rafts from take-out points on the western river bar, which request and are granted a permit from ARRC (currently required) and from the Talkeetna Community Council.
- Private rafters and boaters can pay the campground host a fee and have their boats hauled by ATV to vehicle access points at the edge of the park. If this policy does not work out, for example due to insurance issues, private rafters can pay a small fee to use a cart like those available to campers.

*Winter Use* The current level of snow-machine use is permissible (mostly from locals crossing from Talkeetna to Trapper Creek). This use will be permitted but not promoted. This policy may need to be changed in the future, if the magnitude and impacts of snow machine use significantly increases.

*BarriersGates* will be installed at at least two points otherwise open to vehicular access: the north end of B Street (to allow service vehicles to reach the rip rap rock pile) and at 3<sup>rd</sup> Street (to provide access for commercial rafters).

## 6. TRAILS WITHIN AND THROUGH THE PARK

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### A. BACKGROUND

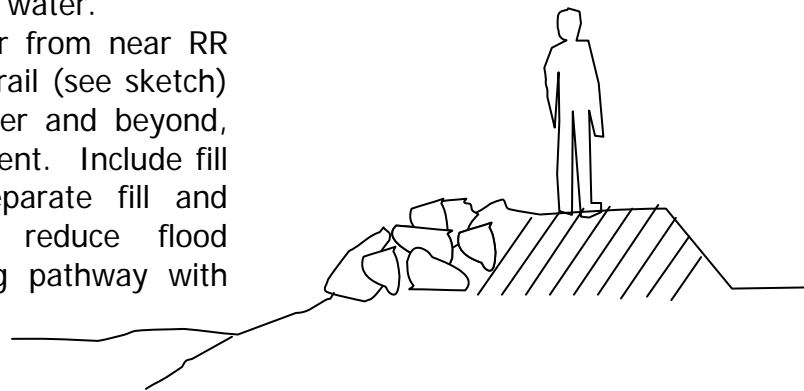
Residents and visitors have traditionally used this park for a range of trail activities, from casual strolling, to winter skiing, snow machines and dog mushing.

### B. APPROVED POLICIES

Provide a range of trail types within and through the park. The first six trails listed below are relatively straightforward to locate and maintain or construct; numbers 7 and 8 need additional planning.

Specific details of the dimensions and surfaces of these trails as well as the design of two “funky but functional” boardwalk slough crossings (near west end of Main St, and at the west end of the vacated Front St. ROW), will need to be worked out during project implementation. Trails number 1, 2 and 3 below are to be gravel-surfaced, handicapped-accessible routes.

1. West from refurbished well parking area – major pedestrian access point, generally following route of existing cleared utility easement (north of now vacated Front Street). Requires construction of simple boardwalk to get over slough.
2. Campground service “road” and trail – expansion of existing informal road; continuation of well parking area trail. In the future consider construction of a handicapped accessible fishing boardwalk at the northern end of this trail.
3. West from west end of Main Street – major pedestrian access point, to river and day use area. Requires construction of simple boardwalk over slough.
4. Campground ‘through’ trail - trail that bisects the campground so passage is not blocked from downtown to the water.
5. Riverfront trail – west along river from near RR Bridge to day use area. Design trail (see sketch) to provide good views of the river and beyond, and to protect integrity of revetment. Include fill against revetment, fabric to separate fill and revetment rocks and further reduce flood potential, small “pull outs” along pathway with space for benches.



6. Chase trail – north to railroad bridge over Talkeetna River; motorized trail.
7. Pedestrian tunnel - create a trail link between west and east Talkeetna. There is strong support for a pedestrian passage under the railroad. The tunnel would provide access to additional parking for overflow downtown and Chase parking. Work is needed with ARRC and DOT/PF to determine design issues and costs.

If a dike is developed along Front St, as proposed for airport flood control, the project would be easier to develop because the tunnel could be located on the “dry” side of this dike. Alternatively, if no dike is developed, the pedestrian tunnel could be designed to open on the east side into an attractive, functional park area that includes as a berm to protect town in times of flooding. Two Anchorage parks - Valley of the Moon and Elderberry – show how park uses can include substantial elevation changes and still be attractive enjoyable places. In either scenario, the tunnel should be designed to provide a safe attractive crossing point from downtown to the east side.

8. Riverfront trail South to Gov’t Parcel 9. This trail is well used, but faces challenges, including concern that continued use degrades the flood control revetment, and the fact that the trail crosses private lands. These issues are beyond the scope of this project.

## **7. USE OF EXISTING “RIVER PARK TRIANGLE”, SURROUNDING ROAD**

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### **A. BACKGROUND**

The Community Tourism Plan identified creation of a turnaround at the west end of Main Street as a priority, and concluded this goal can best be achieved by using the existing “triangle” of roads on the north side of Main, west of B Street. This land is held by the Mat-Su Borough and the ARRC

### **B. APPROVED POLICY**

- Maintain this area’s existing wooded natural feel
- Designate and sign the road that encircles this triangle as a turnaround; provide for parallel parking along one side of this road. More detailed design work is needed to determine dimensions of this road, to determine if this loop would work best traveling clockwise or counterclockwise or in both directions, and to gain needed permits or a lease from MSB and ARRC.
- Different views were voiced regarding the best use of the inside of the triangle. Until recently this area was used as an RV park. A decision has been made to not continue this use. Options for the future use of this area are outlined below:
  - Option 1 (APPROVED): make this area into a more developed portion of the riverfront park, providing day use facilities including a picnic shelter, picnic tables, interpretive information, and trails and signs formally establishing this area as an entry to the riverfront park. If funding can be found, develop a playground for kids. Use a combination of local materials, such as large boulders, a sand play area, logs for climbing and balancing, and some purchased/package play equipment (Midtown Park is an example). More informal play structures (e.g. a couple of good sized boulders,) could also be incorporated into the “day use with facilities” area closer to the river.
  - Option 2: Fee camping area with tent platforms. This option would generate income from this site to help cover park management costs.

- Option 3: Vendor/farmers market – community views on this were mixed. There is agreement on the need for a place for street vendors being shifted off Main St. Some like this location; others are concerned about creating a commercial draw and need for parking on the west side, and also wonder who would manage the market.

## **8. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT - WEST SIDE**

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### **A. BACKGROUND**

This section describes background information for consideration of the issue of commercial development within the Riverfront project area.

Commercial development in downtown Talkeetna is slowly but steadily growing, driven by the recent rapid expansion of tourism. On the west side of the bridge, land in the project area currently serves a valuable role as a recreation and open space area for residents, and helps sustain the sense of a “village in the wilderness” that visitors (including ARRC customers) find so attractive. Maintaining this character is a primary goal of the Talkeetna Comprehensive Plan, and is the driving force behind the recently adopted Special Land Use District (SPUD). At the same time, Alaska Railroad land in the Riverfront Park area is one possible location for a portion of commercial growth, for example, as a site for accommodations, shops, or tourist services.

The consensus opinion of the community of Talkeetna is that the ARRC should leave the western portion of the Riverfront Park in its existing, largely natural state, and manage the area for camping, day use, and related parking. This might include small scale commercial development accessory to the primary open space uses of the site. While acknowledging the railroad mission includes seeking opportunities for development, the community believes recreation and open space-oriented uses in this location are best for residents, tourists, and the Railroad. Support for this conclusion is presented below.

1. *Value to Residents* – this area is Talkeetna’s “back yard” – the town’s ‘out-the-back-door’ open space for walking, fishing, views of Denali, bird and wildlife viewing and general relief from the bustle of downtown.
2. *Value to Tourists and Businesses That Benefit From Tourism* – this area serves the same function for visitors as it does for residents. A big part of Talkeetna’s attraction for visitors is the layout of the town – specifically the combination of concentrated, walkable development along Main Street, and the sense that just beyond this commercial district lays wild Alaska. As a result, minimizing new commercial development of this area is good for business, including the tourism related ventures operated by ARRC.
3. *Congestion And Traffic* – Downtown Talkeetna is already struggling with too many cars and people in a small congested space.
4. *Other ARRC Land Available For Development* – the Riverfront Plan acknowledges ARRC’s need for for-profit development on a portion of its property in the



Talkeetna area. Much of east side property is already leased or permitted for development. This plan identifies more of this land be used in this manner. The community is actively working to improve access to this area, by building a pedestrian tunnel under the railroad tracks, and a new road into the east side starting just south of where the railroad crosses the Spur Road. These two projects will help open the east side to development, at a location within walking distance of Main Street, without adding to the congestion of the west side. The community looks forward to working with the Railroad to make these two projects realities.

5. *Land Use Constraints On the West Side* - Options for commercial development in this area are constrained, as outlined below:
  - Flood hazards – all of this area (like much of Talkeetna) is located within a potential flood hazard area. The more western portions of the west side Riverfront Park, those closer to the river channel, are unsuitable for most development due to flood risks.
  - 200' radius well permit – The portion of the west side of the planning area with the least constraints for flooding is the location of Talkeetna's main community well. The well building and associated DEC restrictions create some constraints on possible development here.
  - Parking – this draft plan recommends the area currently used for parking adjoining the well be refurbished to more efficiently meet parking needs associated with rail users, plus visitors to Main Street and to the Riverfront Park.
  - Talkeetna Special Use District – the recently adopted special use district establishes general standards for the type and size of development possible in this area.

#### B. APPROVED POLICY

Designate east side areas as "Future Commercial Development" (see map for locations). Designate west site area as "Possible Future Development." This area would be retained in its existing largely natural state in the near term, and be available for informal day recreation use. In the future, if the community or ARRC wanted to use this site for some form of developed use (commercial, residential, parking, developed recreation such as trails or other facilities, etc.), or if a third party applicant was to file a request to use this property, the ARRC and the community would meet, discuss options, evaluate the proposal, and work out a mutually agreeable strategy for the land.

## ***EAST SIDE ISSUES***

The Riverfront Park east of the railroad bridge has a quite different set of issues and uses than those on the west side. Most of this area is under lease or permit. Existing uses – including a public boat launch and associated parking lot, campground, boat moorage and staging area for river trips - are generally seen as consistent with community goals, and are therefore recommended by this plan to continue, subject to the policies below.

### **9. DAY USE AREAS (STROLLING, FISHING, PICNIC, ETC.)**

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#### **A. BACKGROUND**

Residents from nearby neighborhoods, and visitors staying in adjoining hotels, have traditionally been able to walk into this area to picnic, see wildlife, or just sit and watch the river. As is the case with the west side, there is little need for extensive day use facilities. Some of these facilities are already provided, in an informal way, by the lessees as part of the boat launch and other commercial recreation activities occurring along the river.

#### **B. APPROVED POLICIES**

Work with existing lessees to explore options to expand day use opportunities, e.g. provide interpretive information, and perhaps picnic tables. Any such facilities will have to be designed to not adversely affect existing lessee operations. The public boat launch, leased from ARRC by Fish and Game, and operated under a concession permit, is perhaps the most appropriate place for such facilities.

### **10. EAST SIDE TRAILS**

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#### **A. BACKGROUND**

As described for day use facilities, people have traditionally walked into this area from adjoining neighborhoods and hotels. Today, fewer people use the east side for this purpose than the west. Construction of a tunnel under the railroad, along with growing commercial development on the east side, will increase demands for this use. During the summer when the campground and boat mooring and staging areas are operating, walking, hiking and similar uses may create problems for lease and permit holders, related to liability, theft and similar issues.

As Talkeetna grows, this area will be increasingly important place for residents and visitors. The committee wants to make this area available year-round for the community in the future. As one person said “we don’t want to be boxed it in like the fight for the Anchorage Coastal Trail.”

## B. APPROVED POLICY

Two types of trails are needed:

- 1) A trail for residents and visitors, leading to the riverfront area from adjoining residential and commercial areas;
- 2) A community trail, similar in function to the traditional (mostly winter) trail that parallels the river and continues out the park to the northeast.

The Steering Committee supports the concept of a dedicated public trails for both of these functions, but recognizes the need for more work on this issue, with the lessees, trail users and the Alaska Railroad. Specific issues to be addressed in resolving this issue are outlined below:

- o Criteria for location of trail: The trail system in the east side area should be designed to link the following points:
  - Planned RR Pedestrian tunnel
  - Continuation of trail that parallels the river to the east of the Riverfront Park (past FAA towers, linking up with existing and planned 5-10K trails)
  - Primary recreation use areas (campground, boat launch, parking)
  - Adjoining residential, commercial and accommodation areas south of the Riverfront Park
- o Trail Location Options: There are several options for the route that parallels the river, these include along the water (between camping and the river), slightly inland of the camping and boat launch areas, or well back from the river, outside the developed area of the existing leases. Crossing this parallel trail could be trail routes that lead to public use "nodes" along the water, where there are benches and/or picnic tables.
- o Approval of existing lessees: these lands are under lease; any plans for a dedicated trail would have to meet lessee approval. While existing leaseholders are quite concerned about the potential impacts of trails on the east side, the community would like to make clear with this plan that they value re-establishing public-access multi-use trails on the east side, and the need to work towards this goal with the lessees and ARRC.
- o Safety: There have been problems with theft in this area in the summer; a more established trail might increase, or might help reduce these problems. Waterfront camping in towns like Seward, and many USFS public campgrounds, have trails that cross through camping areas.
- o In most of Alaska, the state retains a public access easement along the bank of rivers and lakes. In this part of the Riverfront Park, the federal survey defining railroad land ownership precedes statehood, and therefore there is no easement.
- o Possible solutions for further discussion include:
  - Lessees allow public to walk to the river, post signs that guide this use to routes that avoid creating conflicts with lessee activities

- Select a route for a public trail, e.g., along the south edge of the park, that follow the edge of leased areas
- Arrange for different rules in different seasons, e.g., permission through an arrangement with lease-holders to use the trail along the river during the winter

## **11. UNLEASED LAND**

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*“Designating this area [along the river, on either side of the ‘FAA Road’] as a public ‘day use’ area will change the character of that area for the better and help discourage disrespectful activity by the transient population.”*

### **A. BACKGROUND**

About one-third of the land on the east side is unleased (see map on page 5). This includes a block of land south and east of the public boat launch lease area (southeast of the boat launch parking area) and the larger parcel on either side of the ‘FAA Road,’ adjoining G St.

Because of the existing commercial use on the east side, and because of the landowner’s (ARRC) desire to reserve some of the area discussed in this plan for future commercial development, the Railroad has requested that a portion of these unleased areas be designated for “future development” (for details of this discussion, see above section 8, ‘Commercial Development on the West Side of the Riverfront Park).

### **B. APPROVED POLICY**

Designate the unleased block of land that is located on either side of the ‘FAA Road’ near the river as ‘day-use.’ In the near term, this area could become a ‘node’ of public river access under a public entity lease.

Consider designating the little-used southern half of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) boat launch permit either for future commercial development or as possible future public ‘day-use’ area.

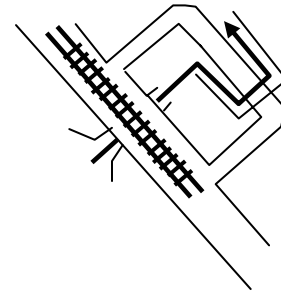
## **12. INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

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**BACKGROUND AND RECOMMENDATION** – The east side of the Riverfront Park area faces several major infrastructure issues, including flood control and river bank stabilization. Responding to these issues will require likely large expenditures, beyond what the community by itself can muster. Consequently the role this Riverfront Plan can play will be to begin the process of reviewing these projects, in advance of eventual action by other parties, such as the Army Corp, ARRC, and

State DOT/PF. At this point the community has not reached a position on these major projects. These projects are further described below.

- Flood control – DOT/PF recently completed flood control studies related to the proposed expansion of the airport. These studies document the potential for flooding at the airport and in adjoining residential areas. Recommended mitigation actions include expanding the Railroad bridge, and constructing a dike. The preferred dike location is under Front and G Streets. This action would have the secondary benefit of making it possible to provide a pedestrian tunnel under the RR without a large flood control containment dike on the east side (avoiding the need for a design like the one shown at right).



- Bank stabilization – The Talkeetna River continues to cut away at its south bank in the area of the boat launch, boat moorage and staging areas. The remnants of past bank stabilization actions (rip rap, old rail cars, other objects) are now exposed at low water, presenting a hazard to boaters. Removing these hazards will likely increase the rate of stream cutting. Further engineering analysis is needed, but it appears a significant bank stabilization project is required.
- Road System – The road system on the east side has grown up organically over the years. The layout of the existing road system is not very efficient. Work is needed to examine the possibility of an improved road system, that could reduce the costs of ongoing maintenance, and to get maximum value from this property. One option, raised at the workshops, would be to eliminate the existing “FAA road”. The FAA road was not built for public use, but due to its location, has become an important community road. This road is in the process of being blocked by the FAA from Beaver Road north and east. If the FAA releases the road back to the RR, the area could be leased to the MSB. Two issues that need to be addressed in this process include:
  - The comp plan shows main traffic flow along ‘G’ Street (platted), not the FAA Road.
  - FAA Road to Beaver Road – how to designate as Road access that would take dense traffic from ‘G’ Street?

# RIVERFRONT PARK PLAN

## IMPLEMENTATION

### INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

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This plan is only the first step in making the Riverfront Park a success; the next and more difficult step is setting up a management framework and carrying out day to day operations. The list below summarizes key assumptions regarding these latter issues:

- The Mat-Su Borough will obtain a lease from ARRC for the west side of the Park, and in turn pass management authority to the Talkeetna Community Council, who will hire one entity to manage the whole park, including camping, parking and day use.
- Active management is key to the success of the park, e.g., to enforce rules for camping, parking, and ATV use.
- The operation philosophy for the park is best described as a blend of business-minded and not-for-profit community service:
  - Management should be business minded, in that the park must generate enough revenues to cover most or all of its operational costs
  - The overall management goal should focus on community service, that is, providing quality services to residents and visitors. Money from parking, camping and other services for which a fee can be charged will be used to cover costs of operating the park. This does not mean that the concessionaire cannot be paid a salary – in fact, the concessionaire must be paid fairly for the work they do, and have financial incentives for doing a good job. But the park as a whole, and its individual components, should not be managed primarily to generate a profit.
- Agreements by *concessionaire*: include a) managing camping, parking, and day use areas, b) enforcing rules, c) charging user fees including maximum allowed fees, d) maintenance and repairs e) record keeping f) compensation
- Agreements by *TCC/Borough*: include a) covering costs of insurance, b) initial capital costs (e.g. construct campground) c) good rate on snow clearing by local road service district d) back-up for enforcement capability. The TCC/Borough role in the project is designed to make it possible for an operator to provide good services for no or low costs to public users.
- Among the key next steps in this process will be working out the specific details of concessionaire agreement.

**1. PARK MANAGEMENT AND DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS**

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The Riverfront Plan sets out plans for campgrounds, parking, and other uses on Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) land, all of which require getting a lease or permit from the Railroad. ARRC issues leases and permits in two categories.

- *Public Use:* includes use for public purposes that generates no revenue other than a nominal fee, e.g., parks, greenbelts, trails; and also non-revenue generating use required for public health, safety and welfare, that can stimulate economic development, e.g., certain recreational uses, roads, utilities like wells, police and fire stations, community centers
- *Commercial Use:* Revenue generating activity by public or private sector, e.g., ports, harbors, parking lots, concessions

Current leases of Talkeetna area Railroad land are shown on the ownership map in the plan on page 6.

**ARRC, Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Talkeetna Community Council Roles**

Leases at less than fair market value are allowed under the ARRC’s public entity lease policy, but under ARRC’s statute, such agreements can only be made with government entities or subdivisions of the state. Consequently the Mat-Su Borough must be an active partner in the implementation of essentially all the recommendations included in this plan. General steps in the lease process are outlined below:

<i>ARRC Lease Approval Process (see ARRC website for details)</i>	<i>Mat Su Borough Lease Approval Process</i>
Submit Lease Application (\$300)	Administrative Review & Recommendation
Administrative Review 7-10 days	Approval by Parks and Rec Board
Appraisal (commercial leases) 14-21 days	Approval by Planning Commission
Public Review 18-33 days	Approval by Assembly
ARRC Board Review (at least) quarterly	

**2. PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS - PRIORITIES FOR NEW PROJECTS**

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Planned improvements and their relative priority are shown in the following tables, ranked using the 4 levels shown below. This table can be misleading in two ways: First, cost estimates are very preliminary. Cost figures are intended to give an order-of-magnitude sense of the high end of the costs to develop planned facilities, reflecting the level of costs that would be required if this was done as a state project. These costs might be significantly lower if the projects are done locally, and/or installed by volunteers. The second category of potential confusion relates to timing. Multiple projects can be listed as highest priorities, as some of these projects can be done in

parallel, because funding sources are different. For example, funding for the Main Street turnaround is different from funding sources for the campground, and different from funding for the RR tunnel. As a result it is possible for the community to pursue three large projects simultaneously.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Priority</b>	Highest	High	Medium	Lower
<b>Timing</b>	Year 1	Year 2-3	Year 3-4	Year 4-6

### Planned improvements - West Side

<b>Project</b>	<b>Rough Cost Estimates</b>	<b>Possible Sources of Funding</b>	<b>Priority</b>
<b>Camping</b> 25 spaces, each with a gravel pad, table, tent platform, firepot a. Site preparation (grading, fill, clean up) b. space for camp host (utilities hookup?) c. shed for supplies, for wood d. drinking water (need more info – well vs. water line) e. bear proof trash cans f. internal signage g. benches 25 @ \$200 each h. picnic tables 25 @ \$250-400 each i. platforms – 25 @ \$300 each j. fire pits (25 @ \$150 each) k. carts (2 @ 300 each?) l. vehicle, four wheeler for maintenance? m. bear proof food containers	\$4000? \$1500 \$1000 \$5000? \$3500 \$1000 \$7500 \$7500 \$3750 \$600	Local volunteers; locally donated materials MSB bed tax MSB bond Local fundraisers	Highest
<i>Sub Total</i> n. restrooms (one set in campground) <i>Total</i>	<u>\$35,350</u> <u>\$25,000</u> <u>\$60,000</u>		Highest
<b>Day Use Facilities</b> a. trash cans (check on what's already been provided) b. picnic tables 5 @ \$300 each c. picnic shelter; construct using local materials d. restroom (at west end of Main Street) e. information kiosk, interpretive signage <i>Total</i>	\$1000 \$1500 \$7500 \$25,000? <u>\$2500</u> <u>\$37,500</u>	Local volunteers MSB bed tax MSB Bond	High
<b>Refurbished Well-Site Parking – 25-30 spaces</b> a. limited clearing b. gravel surface c. curb stops d. internal signage <i>Total (at approx \$1000/space)</i>	\$25-30,000?	Local service district MSB	Highest



**Planned improvements - West Side (continued)**

<i>Project</i>	<i>Rough Cost Estimates</i>	<i>Possible Sources of Funding</i>	<i>Priority</i>
<b>Campground Parking - 20 spaces</b> - clearing, gravel surface, curb stops, internal signage <i>Total</i>	\$20,000?	Local service district /MSB	Highest
<b>Trails/Access and Service Drives/on Street Parking</b>		Local service district, MSB, State/NPS	
a. Gravel Rd: town parking to well site parking (200 ft length; 20 ft width @ \$92.5/linear foot)	\$18,500		Highest
b. Removable barrier/gate and signs: C St. north to well parking	?		High
c. Gravel trail: west from parking to campground; follows existing utility clearing (500 ft; 10' width at \$46.25 per linear foot); wide enough for maint truck (first part is just narrow walking trail; lower priority	\$23,100		Highest
d. simple "bridge" boardwalk	\$5-20,000		High
e. Gravel trail campground internal loop (800', 10' )	\$37,000	Partially exists, reduce cost?	Highest
f. Gravel trail: from end of Main St. to river; handi-capped accessible, (450', 10')	\$21,000		High
g. simple "bridge" boardwalk over slough	\$5-20,000		High
h. Riverfront trail: from railroad bridge to Main Street (1600' long, 8 feet wide @ \$37.5 per linear foot)	\$60,000		Medium
i. Riverfront trail: from south of Main Street 1000' long, 8' wide (issues to resolve include land ownership, use of revetment)	\$37,000		Medium
j. Chase multipurpose/motorized trail – no improvements needed	0		
k. Gravel Rd - Main St. turnaround; upgrade of existing road (1000 ft, 32 feet wide); incl. on-street parking	\$150,000		High
l. Gravel Rd - rip rap access, service road (700 ft, 12') – road needs only minor improvements? Gate required	\$10,000		medium
m. Handicapped Accessible Fishing Boardwalk			medium
n. 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street gate			medium
<i>Total –trails, access &amp; service drives</i>	\$200,000 to \$250,000		
<b>Link between West &amp; East Talkeetna</b>		Railroad, Borough, State and Federal	Highest
a. Pedestrian tunnel (est. from ARRC Willow project)	\$180,000		
b. Improvements at ped tunnel entries (flood berms, landscaping, recreational, etc)	?		
<b>Signage</b>		Local/MSB	Highest
a. Parking signage (e.g., at Spur Rd intersection; other parts of town)			
b. Trail signs (e.g., directions from parking to park)			
c. Interpretive signage			
<i>Total</i>			

## Planned improvements – East Side

<i>Project</i>	<i>Rough Cost Estimates</i>	<i>Possible Sources of Funding</i>	<i>Priority</i>
Day Use Facilities		Local/MSB	Medium
Trails		Local/MSB	Low
Signage		Local/MSB	Medium
Flood Control (linked to tunnel)		ARRC/MSB/State/Federal	<i>Needs further discussion</i>
Bank Stabilization		State/Federal	<i>Needs further discussion</i>
Channel Clearing		Local?	<i>Needs further discussion</i>

## OPTIONS FOR PROJECT FUNDING – partial list

- Local volunteer labor, donated materials, local fundraising (Riverfront Day Event; make sure to recognize volunteers).
- Princess, with CIRI
- Borough bed tax, Borough CIP, Bond measures
- State - DCED mini-grant, TRAAK
- Federal - NPS Rivers and Trails Conservation Grants for trails
- Private foundation grants (Rasmuson Tier I – under \$25,000)
- Federal appropriations (direct \$ from Congressional delegation, USDA programs (perhaps USFS community assistance grant – check applicability)
- Partnerships with state and federal agencies – National Park Service, ARRC

## 3. ONGOING OPERATIONS: PARKING, CAMPGROUND, PARK ITSELF

### Introduction

This section presents preliminary recommendations for steps to implement the land use proposals earlier in the plan, including answers to the questions below:

1. What scale of improvements is planned?
2. Who will manage project development, ongoing operation?
3. What costs and revenues are tied to these activities?
4. Do revenues cover costs? If not, what source of subsidy funds?
5. What rules will control use (parking, camping, ATV's, etc.)
6. Who will enforce the rules, what consequences if they are not followed?

This section is not intended to provide fixed, final answers to these questions, particularly regarding fees and revenues for parking and camping. Instead the purpose of the section is to assess the general feasibility of planned park improvements, in light

of expected costs and revenues. The second major purpose is to document community intentions regarding likely level of fees for parking and camping, and the general structure of rules to make the park work. For example, the cost for day use parking and seasonal parking should be a low, and this plan presents a first set of recommendations about what is meant by low. As is outlined below, many park activities will be operated under a concessionaire agreement with the borough. Final decisions on fees and rules will have to be worked out in negotiations with the community, the Mat Su Borough, and this eventual park concession operator.

**General Strategy**

1. *Consequences* – Before imposing new rules Talkeetna must have capacity to enforce them; consequences for breaking rules must be clear, fair.
2. *Community Support* – Rules have to be widely accepted, so the whole community works together to be sure they are followed. Rules won't work if, for example, half the parents in town think their kid did nothing wrong by camping out or 4-wheeling on the river bar.
3. *Go Slow* – Imposition of rules and fees is a big step in Talkeetna. At least in the near term, fees should be low and rules should be few and simple. In later years, after people have come to understand and accept the rules, fees might have to be raised to more completely cover costs.

**Parking Parking Parking Parking Parking Parking Parking Parking**

1. *What Scale of Parking Improvements is Planned?*

- three parking lots: "townsite", well-site, campground (townsite refers to the existing parking area next to the RR just north of the park)
- on-street parking at B St triangle
- trash cans in the vicinity, but not directly in the parking area (otherwise RV's will empty all their garbage, occasionally including rotting fish)
- quality service: safe, secure, attractive, accessible
- signage and educational program (for visitors, for community, for employees)
- size and management of parking areas

<i>Area</i>	<i>Size</i>	<i>Summer Use</i>	<i>Winter Use</i>
townsite	66	Day use only	Day use unrestricted; overnight and or long term: see "well site"
well site	15	"up-the-tracks" permit users	Same as summer
well site	15	"up-the-tracks" overnight users	Same as summer
campground	25	restricted to campers (camping fee covers parking)	Closed, not plowed

*Note:* the actions described above are not sufficient to meet Talkeetna's parking needs. Additional projects are required, including a signage/"wayfinding" plan, east side

parking & access, enforcement of on-street parking rules, RV intercept parking, community education, and an employee parking strategy.

2. *Who Manages Parking Development and Operations?*

- Borough leases land from ARRC; borough then issues a secondary authorization to a private operator (or perhaps local road service district).
- **Aim to manage parking, camping, park as a single entity, under a single concessionaire arrangement**
- Community/MSB invest in parking, campsites, etc. Borough authorization sets general terms for operation and helps community set targets for fees, but concessionaire has ability to cover costs and make a small profit.

3. *What Costs And Revenues Associated with Parking?*

Pricing strategy: cover costs of operation; be realistic about what people will pay if on-street parking is free; provide good quality product.

<i>Area</i>	<i>Terms</i>	<i>Revenues</i>				<i>Revenue</i>
		<i>Fee</i>	<i>Spaces</i>	<i>Season</i>	<i>Occupy</i>	
Railroad	day use	\$2	66	150	40%	\$7,920
Railroad	winter day	No fee				0
Well site (summer); railroad lot (winter)	annual permit (per vehicle)	\$200	15	1	100%	\$3000
Well site/RR lot	Weekly permit	\$20	15	52	40%	\$6240
Well site/RR lot	Overnight ?	\$5 (pass book?)				0
Parking fines		\$20		150	1.5/day	\$4500
<i>Total Revenue</i>						\$21,660

<i>Costs</i>		<i>Cost/Yr</i>
<i>Ongoing Operations Activity</i>		
<u>Snow Removal</u> – D&S charges \$90-\$120/plow. Client can have snow removed every 2", 6", weekly, on call, etc. Cost fluctuates according to where snow is dumped. (assume \$100/week for 7 mos., for ARR lot only)		\$3000
<u>Annual Grading Maintenance</u> - about \$175 to grade one lot, only needed every 1-3 years. Assume 2 of 3 lots every year		\$400
<u>Annual repairs</u> – signs, fee collection equipment, curb blocks		\$1000
<u>Person to collect fees</u> - \$100/day for 150 days? Responsibilities include working on campground, park maintenance		\$15,000
<u>Manager/Concessionaire</u>		\$3000
<u>Lease costs</u>		\$0
<u>Insurance</u> – by MSB if community manages		\$0
<u>Total Costs</u>		<u>\$22,400</u>

#### 4. Do Parking Operations Revenues Cover Costs?

Initial analysis suggests parking covers parking operations costs and also generates funds for campground and park management.

#### 5. What Rules Control Parking?

- No overnight parking without overnight permit
- No camping, campfires
- Maximum size limit on vehicles (about 20 feet)
- Recommended Payment Method - State Parks style parking lot enforcement: put envelope with cash in "iron ranger," place tab on windshield. Unpaid cars get "booted" – 55 gallon drum filled with concrete with cable attached. Use signs to make clear what happens if you don't pay; paint drum so it's clear what you do to release your car. Don't boot if cars can't be promptly released.
- Alternative payment method: Urban-style parking lot enforcement, with numbered spaces, pay at central pay box. Unpaid cars get a parking ticket, unpaid tickets get nasty collection agency notice (but hard to enforce if not tied to long term risk of state enforcement go to jail)

#### 6. Who Will Enforce The Rules?

- Concessionaire hires person to check cars, "boot up" those who don't pay, and be available to field calls and release cars of "bootees"
- Same person also responsible for park & campground maintenance.
- Need option to occasionally call for support for angry, uncooperative parkers: first option is friendly campground host, then stern concessionaire; fall back is state trooper and/or future borough police.

This system will only work if it is simple and widely understood. The Chamber needs to help explain rules to community. Friendly but very direct and clear signage is essential, to explain fees and consequences of not paying. Information on parking locations, rules should be included in the Milepost.

**Thank you for visiting Talkeetna Park all day for just \$2<sup>00</sup> !**

This fee helps cover the cost of maintaining this parking lot.

*Oh no Martha – we've been booted!*



**Don't pay – get booted. Call our friendly parking attendant and \$20 will set you free. No camping, fires, or overnight parking without a permit. Abandoned cars towed.**

## Campground Campground Campground Campground Campground

### 1. What Scale of Improvements is Planned?

- 25 site, walk-in campground; with restrooms, trash cans, access trail, dedicated parking lot and carts for bringing in gear (2)
- camp host site – space for a trailer with electricity/propane
- quality, attractive campsites: picnic table, tent platform, fire pit with grill
- Signage, education program

### 2. Who Manages the Campground?

- Goal is single entity managing parking, campground and park as a whole
- Day to day camping operations overseen by campground host.

### 3. What Costs & Revenues Would Be Associated with Campground Operations?

- Pricing strategy: keep costs low. Cover ongoing costs of operation.
- Be realistic about what people will pay, especially if its possible to sneak off into the woods and camp for free, and enforcement is limited
- Competition: Most State or National Park campgrounds in Alaska charge an overnight camping fee of \$5 to \$15 per night. Most privately owned and operated campgrounds provide electric, water, sewer hook-ups, restrooms and showers, for a charge of \$16 to \$28 per night for 2 people. (from Bells Alaska Travel Guide)

## Campground Annual Operating costs – 5 month season; May - September

Area	Terms	Revenues			Occup	Revenue
		Fee	Spaces	Season		
Campground	daily	\$10	25	150	40%	\$15,000
Firewood sales						\$1,000
<i>Total</i>						\$16,000

AK State Parks pays \$125 for a cord (4x4x8 feet) of split, cut wood. They bundle the wood and sell for \$5/bundle (50 bundles/cord = \$250 in revenue, profit is \$2.50/cord). Assume sell 5 bundles/night for 150 nights; earn about \$1000 per season.

Costs		Cost/Yr
Ongoing Operations Activity		
<u>Hourly employee:</u> Supplements person paid through parking fees. Assume \$10/hour - 10 hours/week, 20 weeks. Tasks shared by these two positions include: trash collection, stock firewood, clean toilets, clean firepots, cut brush overgrowth, repairs (e.g., replace picnic table leg, replace hinges on toilet door) remove graffiti, repaint, spring cleaning		\$2000
<u>Campground host:</u>		\$1500
Stipend (State Park Service pays \$100 + propane if not caretaker and \$300 + propane if caretaker). Duties include managing paid employee, greeting campers, watching over campground.		

<u>Manager/Concessionaire</u>	\$3500
- Financial management, campground fee collection	
- Supervise campground host/employee	
Average 7 hours/wk at equivalent of \$15/hour + (2 wks/ season) to relieve campground host	
<u>Toilets:</u>	
- Alternative 1: lease port-a-can; 4 units for 5 months @ \$200/month/unit = \$4000	\$4700
- Preferred Alternative – build permanent toilet, more upfront cost, lower ongoing costs	
- pumping fee (including mileage) = \$700	
<u>Water tests</u> \$200 (including labor)	\$250
- Monthly collaform bacteria test – each test = \$25 + delivery to lab in Wasilla or Palmer. If test fails (which often happens toward end of season) 4 sample tests required.	
- Annual nitrate test \$25 + labor	
<u>Garbage collection</u> / Dumpster (\$185/month + deposit)	\$2500
<u>Electrical hook-up</u> for host (\$50 / month???)	\$250
<u>Supplies</u> (toilet paper, paint, fee envelopes, etc.)	\$500
Total	\$15,200

\*preliminary cost estimates from interview with AK State Parks, MSB Parks, Dennis Freeman's research; needs further review and refinement

#### 4. *Do Campground Operations Cover Costs?*

- Campground operations, when combined with parking appear to cover costs, assuming good management, and good ongoing volunteer, community support

#### 5. *What Rules Control Campground Use?*

- Limits on stay – 7 days (or 14?)
- Follow normal state rules
- No reservations
- Employees allowed if they pay, and move every 7 days?
- Common courtesy re noise, trash, etc.

#### 6. *Who will enforce the rules?*

- Camp host – collects fees, watches over daily operations of campground and park as a whole
- Advice from Dennis H at AK State Parks Service: Hosts should not handle the money because they are often older people who would be vulnerable to theft if it became known they had cash box in their RV
- Need option to call on stern concessionaire and/or occasional trooper, future borough police to deal with wanton disregard for rules. Community should further discuss enforcement options.

## Park Park Park Park Park Park Park Park - Overall Park Management

### 1. What General Park Development is Planned or Needed?

- Day use facilities – picnic tables, picnic structure, trails
- Restrooms, trash cans
- Signage, education program (sign, brochure with map and rules?)

### 2. Who Manages the Park?

- Same group of people who manage parking and campground

### 3. What Costs and Revenues to Operate the Park?

<b>Revenues</b>						
<b>Area</b>	<b>Terms</b>	<b>Fee</b>	<b>Spaces</b>	<b>Season</b>	<b>Occup</b>	<b>Revenue</b>
Park generally	Day use	free				0
Picnic shelter?	Special events	\$30			15/yr	\$450
<b>Total</b>						<b>\$450</b>

(MSB charges \$20 half day, \$30 full day to rent park facilities; days are 10AM to 4, 4PM to 10PM)

<b>Costs</b>	
<b>Ongoing Operations Activity</b>	<b>Cost/Yr</b>
Annual maintenance, repairs - picnic tables, picnic shelter, signs	
Annual maintenance, repairs - trails, ORV berms	
Empty trash cans, maintain restrooms - part of parking/camping	
Enforce no camping, no RV use – part of parking/camping	
<b>Total</b> – assume these tasks are covered by camp host and parking/campground paid employee, plus community volunteers	

### 4. Do Revenues Cover Costs?

- With the park, campground and parking managed as a single entity, parking and camping revenues should cover general park operating costs, assuming good management, and ongoing volunteer, community support

### 5. What Rules Control Park Use?

- No camping except in designated camping areas
- No motorized vehicles except as authorized for limited, specific uses
- Standard State rules (e.g., re alcohol and minors, litter)

### 6. Who Will Enforce Regular Park Rules?

- Campground operator for day to day, with option for support:
  - o Actions to discourage illegal camping, illegal ORV use: walk through area, tell people who are breaking rules to stop, who are camping to leave.
  - o If rule breakers persist, have ability to call in occasional trooper and/or future borough police



*7. What Special Rules for Events? / How to Enforce Rules During Events?*

- Set up special facilities during events (e.g. Moose dropping) including extra portapotties, and dumpsters
- allow camping for a fee on gravel bar, assuming river water conditions make this safe and practical
- make special arrangements with the State Troopers (or future Borough police) well in advance of the events, to ensure Troopers are present during late evenings, and other potential trouble times.

**KEY ISSUES THAT WILL NOT BE ADDRESSED THROUGH THE RIVERFRONT PARK PLAN PROCESS**

By design, the Riverfront Plan focuses on one relatively small portion of the Talkeetna. For the recommendations presented here to be most successful, however, will require action in other parts of the community. The Talkeetna Community Tourism Plan presents a multi-year implementation framework that sets out a specific schedule for key projects. Of those projects, those most critical for the success of this Riverfront Plan include RV parking, parking enforcement, community-wide signage, Main Street improvements, and community wide trails planning.

**INFORMATION SOURCES:**

1. campground start-up and operating costs provided by Dennis Heikes (sp?), Superintendent of Mat-Su Area office 745 3975
2. Report on Campground Development Feasibility, Dennis Freeman, Summer 2002
3. Snow plow and garbage collection costs provided by Elizabeth at DNS Road Services / Talkeetna Refuse and Transfer Station 733 2211
4. Preliminary review of campground development and operations costs, by Bruce Urban, Mat Su Borough Recreation Services Manager

# RIVERFRONT PARK PLAN

## NEXT STEPS

<i>Task</i>	<i>Timing</i>
<b>A. Conduct Public Workshop - complete</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with Steering Committee to define and split responsibilities for publicizing, hosting community workshop</li> </ul>	End of August
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold Workshop</li> </ul>	Sept 9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deadline for Plan comments</li> </ul>	Sept 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold teleconference meeting shortly after end of comment period, for Steering Committee to recommend adoption of plan, as amended</li> </ul>	Sept
<b>B. Final Changes &amp; Approval</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Steering Committee takes plan to TCC for adoption</li> </ul>	Oct 03
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TCC and Steering Committee take plan to MSB for formal approval</li> </ul>	Fall 2003
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TCC and Steering Committee take plan to ARRC for formal approval</li> </ul>	Fall 2003

### Notes on the Process of Final Changes & Approval

The community and any other parties will have additional chances to review and comment on this plan during the process of review and approval by the TCC, Borough and Alaska Railroad.

Approval by ARRC and the Borough are essential for this plan to be meaningful. Consultants will assist the steering committee in the approval process and attend up to two meetings once the final draft is prepared, most likely assisting in presentations of the plan to the ARRC and the Borough Planning Commission (see April 9<sup>th</sup> meeting notes).



## **APPENDIX A – EMPLOYEE ACCOMODATIONS: HOUSING & CAMPING**

### **LESSONS FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES**

One of the main concerns facing the community of Talkeetna along the Riverfront is the issue of people illegally setting up 'permanent' camps throughout the summer on land owned by the ARRC. Some of these campers are seasonal employees of local businesses; others are identified as friends of these employees and/or teenagers who have no place to live. While some community members feel these campers don't create a problem (besides the fact that they are camping illegally), others have identified associated problems as:

- Disrespectful, noisy, irresponsible, unsafe behavior
- Unmanaged area
- Litter and human waste
- Alcohol and drugs
- Firearms
- Wildfire danger (campfires)
- Bear attraction
- Environmental damage at campsites

In addition, several people at the community meetings maintained that the area no longer feels comfortable for those not camping (both residents and visitors) to enjoy.

In an effort to learn more about how other communities have dealt with this issue, we spoke with people, at Denali National Park and in McCarthy, Homer, Cordova, Seward and Girdwood. Findings are summarized below:

### **SUMMARY OF BENEFITS**

Based on our conversations with other communities and with Talkeetna businesses, we have found that when employers make arrangements for housing for seasonal employees:

*Employees Benefit* – decent, affordable, reliable place to live

*Employers Benefit* – clean, rested, more reliable employees lead to better service to customers

*Community Benefits* – control of trash, sanitation, bear problems, vandalism, etc.

## **McCARTHY: GUIDE SERVICES, AIR TAXIS, LODGES**

- Many employees camp on employer's private land in wall tents and an enclosed building with a kitchen provided by employer (keeps bears away). There is no additional charge to employees.
- Others live in dorm-style buildings provided by businesses.
- A few employees camp in scattered locations.

## **HOMER: CANNERY**

Before the cannery burned down a couple of years ago, the city 'leased' a designated area (for a nominal fee) to the cannery for employees to camp. The area was clearly marked both for those living there and for visitors seeking short-term camping spots. Hundreds of workers lived here year-round for about 20 years.

*Management:* The cannery was responsible for disposing of trash. Employees did not pay a fee to camp.

*Enforcement:* The police were responsible for law enforcement. Workers worked in different shifts – so there were always people around to make sure things weren't stolen. This would be more difficult with jobs that were primarily at one time of day.

*Short-term visitor camping:* The cannery closed and the city no longer leases long-term camping. Employers now generally provide seasonal housing for their employees on private land. The city currently offers space on 'the spit' for 14-day maximum camping. "This keeps people from building 'Taj Mahals' with blue tarps."

Fees: RVs pay \$10/night. Tents pay \$6/night.

Facilities: There are no RV hook-ups. The city provides outhouses, potable water and garbage cans.

## **CORDOVA: CANNERY**

Cannery workers used to camp within city limits. The city adopted an ordinance that allows no camping in city limits. Campers can camp anywhere outside city limits on public land. Area canneries provide bunkhouses with kitchens for employees to stay. There is no extra charge for lodging; it is part of their employment.

*Hippy Cove Area* Land in this area is owned by several private owners – some have businesses and provide lodging for employees on their own land. Now maybe 6 people at a time camp illegally in the woods – but they don't create too much of a problem. In the past, there was much controversy when the area was cleared of a large number of camps inhabited by seasonal employees and others.

## LESSONS FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES (continued)

### **SEWARD: PUBLIC FACILITY: CAMPING** (large volume of camping along the beach)

The City of Seward allows camping on the 1-mile stretch of beach in the downtown area. Regulated camping was established about 5 years ago to address problems with increased crowding and longer-term camping. There is now space for approximately 100 tents (and approximately 350 RV spots). Most campsites are designated and allow 2 tents / campsite. The designation of sites reduced the density of tents from 100 to about 60. The city created the sites by dividing areas with logs and concrete bumpers.

- *Camping Regulations:*
  - Self-pay fee system RV - \$12 / night; Tent - \$8 / night
  - 14-day limit per campsite
  - Require campers to keep area orderly
  - Tent-campers are not allowed to use lumber or clear viscene; blue tarps are okay
  - The City is always fine-tuning the regulations – vague wording leads to misinterpretation (i.e. ‘all dogs must be on leash’ changed to ‘all dogs must be on leash 12’ or shorter’ changed to ‘all vicious dogs...’)
  - Bulletin board clearly posts regulations – this helps with enforcement
- *Longer-term camping:* City estimates about 20 longer-term campers stay in the area each summer. People complain about being asked to move every two weeks, but most comply with threat of fine or confiscation of gear. Most employers in the area now provide housing for their seasonal employees. The regulation of campsites has caused seasonal employee camping along the beach to decrease – this has motivated one local cannery to build a dorm and to create employee camping space on private property.
- *Enforcement:* Enforcement is the key to having a campground that works. Most problems are avoided by having a manager or host on site to maintain a presence and by clearly posting regulations.

The city ordinance has a clause that describes illegal camping citation as ‘Theft of Services’ with a \$200 fine. Park staff usually lets a few days go by, then leaves a series of notices: Day 1 – friendly Day 2 – threat Day 3 – eviction

### **DENALI NATIONAL PARK: COMMERCIAL CONCESSIONNAIRES**

Concessionaires (lodges, tours, mercantile, private campgrounds) at the Park are required by the National Parks Service to house their employees on private land. However, they have always taken this responsibility on their own, acknowledging that the cost of doing business includes providing safe, healthy environment with meals, showers and laundry services. Some arrangements include:

- Kantishna – provides wall tents
- Doyon, Inc. (businesses include tour buses, campground, mercantile, shower, laundry) – approx. 300 employees are housed in a variety of dorms with 2- person occupancy

rooms and cabins. Employees pay a fee of \$12 / day which covers lodging, 3 meals/day, laundry and shower.

- Princess hotels – purchased an old hotel in Healy and renovated into dorm-style employee housing
- McKinley Village (Aeromark hotel) – a private hotel was relocated and turned into dorm-style employee housing. The company also provides a campground on private land for employees.

Associated problems:

- Occasionally people try to camp within park boundaries over the 14-day limit. This is a mix of employees and local transient people.
- There have also been problems with people (not necessarily employees) illegally camping at road turn-outs and gravel pits and leaving trash that attracts bears and human waste/toilet paper in the woods nearby. The DOT/PF posted 'No Camping' signs in these areas and this has reduced the problem.
- State troopers enforce law in the area

### **GIRDWOOD: SKI RESORT**

Girdwood is a resort ski town with a relatively large transient population that includes seasonal employees. Over the past few years, several people, believed to be primarily local seasonal employees, have constructed 'permanent' tree houses (approximately 20-40) on land owned by the Heritage Land Bank.

When Alyeska Resort was established, the company made no provisions for their seasonal employees. Now that the population has grown in the area, the community is experiencing difficulty with reconciling problems associated with seasonal camps (litter, trespassing, disrespectful habitation). Land use regulations proposed for the area allow 'mother in law' apartments as one means to add to the local housing stock.

The Heritage Land Bank formed an advisory committee to address the problem. Steps taken toward this include:

- Tree-house removal: Signs were posted in the area six months prior to removal. Last summer (2002) the Heritage Land Bank worked with the Municipality of Anchorage to remove twelve tree-houses. All but one had been vacated by the time of removal, and the one remaining inhabitant was fairly congenial.
- Clean-up: local Boy Scouts volunteered to clean the litter in the area.

A subcommittee to the advisory committee has formed to address the possibility of providing a camping/'tree house district' for the displaced campers. This effort is currently in process of negotiation. No resolution has been made.

## EMPLOYEE HOUSING – in Talkeetna

We also spoke with some business owners in Talkeetna to learn about what, if any, arrangements they make for housing of their seasonal employees. Most businesses that we spoke with provide living space (cabins or tent-camping space) for their summer employees. We learned that most employers of seasonal workers either hire locals or provide housing for their employees; however, there are a few who do not. The following summarizes our findings. We spoke with 8 businesses: 2 lodges, 1 hostel, 3 guides services, 2 air taxi services.

### Lodge 1

- 8 employees
- Used to hire employees who camped along the river - now rents wall tents (\$200/month) and cabins to employees (\$300-\$550/month.) This cost includes access to a bathhouse, cookhouse (residents do their own cooking) and lounge with TV, darts, internet access.
- Last year 40% of occupants were lodge employees – 60% were working at other local businesses

### Lodge 2

- 3 employees this year
- rarely hires seasonal non-local employees

### Hostel

- 2 employees
- Provides 2 small cabins on private land for employees to live. Employees use showers and kitchen at the hostel.

### Guide Service 1

- 40-45 employees in summer, mostly local
- Offers a bunkhouse for non-local guides – there are three guides living in the bunkhouse in winter. Used to hire employees who were camping along the river, but a few years ago they opened the bunkhouse to house employees.

### Guide Service 2

- 24 employees
- Owners make arrangements with other cabin owners in the area to house employees – the owners pay the rent to the cabin owner, and take the rent out of the employee's check. Property owners are more comfortable with this arrangement.
- Each cabin costs \$100 - \$150 / month
- Most cabins have an outhouse and electricity, and no plumbing.
- This business also allows a few employees to camp on private property.

### Guide Service 3

- 15 employees at peak season (almost all are summer seasonal)
- Provides housing for their employees on private property
- Each employee pays \$50 / month for their own cabin – this includes outhouses and a central cook house with refrigeration and water. Employees cook for themselves.



The company has always provided housing for their employees, believing that, *"if we provide a good environment for our employees, they will be happier and this will be reflected in the business."*

#### Air Taxi 1

- 25-30 (14 pilots, 13-14 office staff) – most are seasonal
- This business does not provide housing for office staff (most pilots have their own house in area). About 9 of the 13-14 office staff are 'floating' (i.e. camping or finding their own place to rent). One of the pilots offers space on their property for about 5 office staff to camp.

From office staff-person: *"I'd rather camp in a place that is legal. But there's nowhere around here to camp where you won't get booted off – and \$12 / night is too much. I'd be willing to pay about \$100 / month to camp in a place that had an outhouse and drinking water."*

#### Air Taxi 2

- 10 employees last year (5 pilots, 5 office staff)
- All current employees are local. They do have a small guesthouse that is occasionally used for employee housing. They are planning on building another small cabin that could be used for employee housing.

The person we interviewed believes there are lots of cabins around the area available for rent – most cost about \$300/month.

## APPENDIX B – FISHING AND BOAT LAUNCH USE

<b># of Angler Days Fished: East Susitna River Drainage</b>												
1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	2000	2001
77,817	107,977	96,864	101,917	113,178	149,484	128,382	114,533	102,686	83,227	85,228	141,609	121,039

Source: Alaska Department of Fish & Game Statewide Harvest Survey

Statewide harvest surveys are based on random surveys sent to people who hold fishing licenses. Often, local people fish account for much of the fishing, but don't respond to the survey. The ADF&G changed its method of conducting the survey in the mid-1990s; this explains the drop between 1995 and 1996.

2.

<b># of Angler Days Fished: Talkeetna river and Tributaries, including Clear Creek</b>												
1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	2000	2001
<i>not available</i>											21,324	21,590

3.

Yearly totals: ADF&G Boat Launch at Talkeetna <i># of passes sold</i>						
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
<i>Launches</i>	812	1066	916	813	828	855
<i>Parking</i>	1818	2446	2493	1726	1937	3261
<i>Season Pass</i>	12	17	16	18	18	29
<i>Commercial Pass</i>	1	3	7	7	6	7
<i>Extra Boats</i>	-	-	-	-	6	6

Source: ADF&G Division of Sport Fish

These figures are collected by seasonal employees at Talkeetna River Adventures. They became more diligent about keeping track in the last few years.