

CITY OF McGRATH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



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INTRODUCTION

This summary plan highlights the recommendations of the recently adopted CITY OF McGRATH COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN. It thus summarizes:

- the general setting of the McGrath community;
- important findings of a community attitudinal survey concerning McGrath as it is and as it should be;
- background information on the physical, social and environmental characteristics as they will influence community expansion;
- existing land use and ownership characteristics that will influence community expansion;
- economic and population growth that McGrath can be expected to accommodate over the foreseeable future;
- a suggested system for the allocation and spatial arrangement of residential, commercial, industrial, and public land uses and associated rights-of-way that expected economic/population growth will require; and,
- community facilities, services and housing that will be required to support expected population growth.

The recommendations contained herein were developed with the close cooperation of the city planning commission, city council and city administrator in response to a request for a comprehensive plan for the existing townsite.

Community Relocation — Our background studies show that flooding and erosion hazards make the continued occupation and development of the present townsite inadvisable. Rather, it is recommended that all future development be directed to Cranberry Ridge. This higher and safer ground is approxi-

- Most survey respondents prefer a maximum population of 500 in McGrath.

Social Services and Issues

- A large majority (70%) of the survey respondents would like to have a job training program in McGrath.
- Residents would like more services provided locally by the private sector.
- Half the respondents agree that the present level of federal and state government services in McGrath should be maintained; 20% would like to see these services expanded.
- The most highly ranked priorities in potential city services include: improved emergency medical services; a central water distribution system; riverbank stabilization; and a central sewage system.



McGrath's resident public health nurse serves a regional population of 750, at clinics in nearby villages and at the McGrath Health Center.

Housing

- Most residents (65%) feel there is a shortage of adequate housing in McGrath, especially high priced rentals.

Land Use Patterns

- Uncontrolled growth and sprawl are concerns of the McGrath community.
- A severe shortage of developable land is considered the major issue in McGrath.
- 90% of those surveyed obtain some form of subsistence resources within five miles of McGrath.
- A slight majority favors city regulation of land uses.
- 60% of all respondents favor zoning of industrial uses.
- Almost two-thirds of the sample (65%) desire the adoption of building regulations to control construction in hazardous zones.
- Land uses that generate a great deal of activity (gas stations and grocery stores, for example) are considered least compatible with residential uses.
- Residential land use is strongly preferred for the riverfront.
- Business and industrial activities are the only land uses desired around the airport.
- 70% of all respondents favor imposition of minimum lot size standards on subdivision developments.
- The demand for buildable homesites is so great that pressure exists to continue to build in marginal or unsafe housing areas.
- Respondents are evenly divided over the question of relocation to Cranberry Ridge.
- More than 80% of the sample favors using city-owned land for private homesites.

Local Government

- McGrath's city administration received the highest public approval rating in the entire survey.
- Suggested improvements in city administration include increasing local government pay scales, and extending the length of the mayoral term.
- Public dissatisfaction is greatest with the following city services: animal control, police protection and parks.

Capital Improvements and Public Facilities

- Lack of public facilities is widely named as McGrath's worst feature.
- A large majority of respondents do not desire an increase in the present level of government services in McGrath.
- McGrath currently relies strongly on individual, not community, water and sewage facilities.

Recreation

- Parks received the lowest overall quality rating of all present city services.
- The most desired recreational improvement is a combination activities field/children's playground.
- Motorized forms of outdoor recreation, including boating, snowmobiling, flying and motorcycling are the most popular forms of recreation in McGrath.
- Suggested improvements in city facilities include a baseball park, bowling alley and swimming pool.

Transportation and Communications

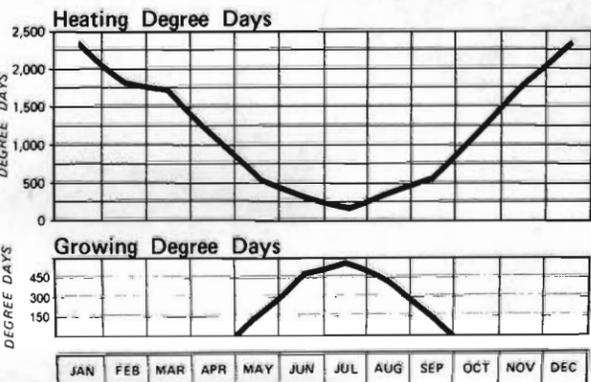
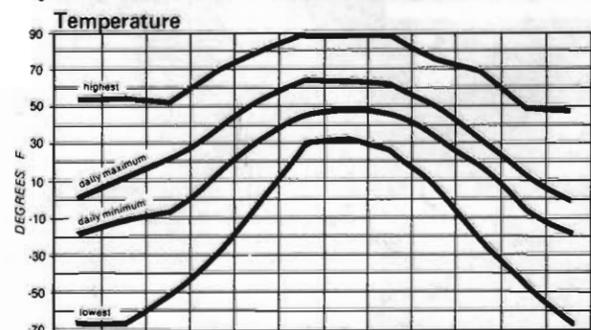
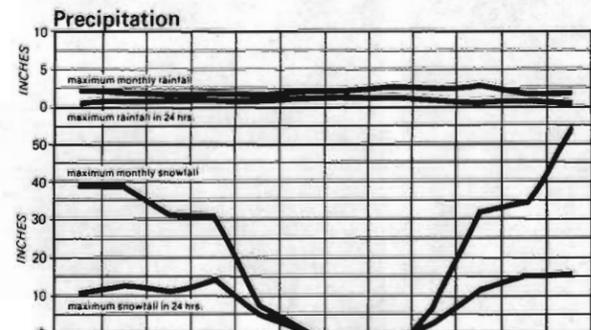
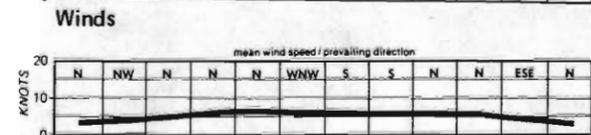
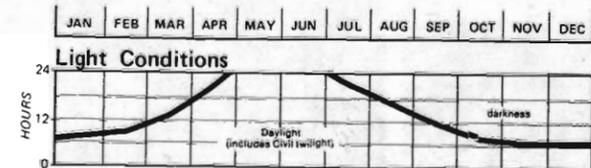
- The survey indicates that approximately 65% of all household goods purchased by McGrath residents are imported.
- Business, medical needs and shopping are listed as the main reasons people make trips outside of McGrath.
- Radio and newspaper are the only communications services generally rated as "good."
- The AC pumphouse is cited as the most desirable location for a small boat harbor and floatplane basin.



the old army camp. This erosion has been measured over the past 40 years at an annual average rate of loss of 2 feet per year. Ice jams in the Kuskokwim River also cause extensive damage to riverbank trees and property during spring breakup.

The imminent breakthrough of an "oxbow" neck south of the developed townsite could render McGrath an island in an oxbow lake, inaccessible to river traffic. Since this could occur in as little as 3 years, it is our recommendation that McGrath begin planning for a more stable future by considering a very gradual, phased move to higher ground. Accordingly, we suggest that:

- all future capital investment in the floodplain be discouraged; and
- all future development be directed to Cranberry Ridge.



Wildlife and Vegetation — Vegetation at the townsite of McGrath is largely black spruce with mosses and sedges in the wet lowlands, and some birch on the higher, drier ground. The well-drained soils of the natural levees, including Cranberry Ridge, support stands of white spruce suitable for commercial use. Paper birch, quaking aspen, balsam poplar, cottonwood and willow are also scattered throughout the region and reflect either the occurrence of well-drained sites or the "nursery crop" in a burned area following a forest fire.

Undergrowth around the McGrath area is generally dense, consisting of high and low shrubs including alder, willow, rose,

required to support expected population growth. The recommendations contained herein were developed with the close cooperation of the city planning commission, city council and city administrator in response to a request for a comprehensive plan for the existing townsite.

Community Relocation — Our background studies show that flooding and erosion hazards make the continued occupation and development of the present townsite inadvisable. Rather, it is recommended that all future development be directed to Cranberry Ridge. This higher and safer ground is approximately 4.5 miles from the present townsite. A road to the Ridge was completed in 1980.

If the move to Cranberry Ridge does not take place, the city will need a plan to ensure the orderly continued development of the present townsite. It is to this end that this comprehensive development plan was prepared.

If more detailed information is required on any subject outlined in this summary, copies of the entire CITY OF McGRATH COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN are available from the City of McGrath and the Alaska State Department of Community and Regional Affairs — Community Planning Division.

GENERAL SETTING

McGrath is located in Interior Alaska 220 miles northwest of Anchorage and 280 miles southwest of Fairbanks (62 degrees 57' 30" N., 155 degrees 35' 30" W.). The community is situated on a floodplain adjacent to the Kuskokwim River opposite its confluence with the Takotna River.

According to preliminary 1980 Census figures, 353 people reside in McGrath. Unlike most rural Alaskan communities, McGrath has a fairly even mix of Native and non-Native residents.

Originally, McGrath was a seasonal Native village which grew into a small mining supply center for a gold rush that lasted from the late 1890's through the 1940's. More recently, McGrath has become the major service and supply center for the communities of Takotna, Nikolai and Telida. Furthermore, it has become the regional center on the upper Kuskokwim for education, transportation and large-scale mining exploration.



McGrath's main commercial strip, including the Alaska Commercial Co. store, the Iditarod Trail Cafe, Beaver Sporting Goods, McGrath Light and Power Co. and the Vinasale fuel distributorship, is bordered by the state air taxiway.

COMMUNITY ATTITUDES

The first component of McGrath's comprehensive development planning process was a survey of community attitudes concerning present and future community development issues. The purpose of the survey was to measure local opinions and attitudes for inclusion in the remaining community planning elements. The survey was based on a random sample of 15% of McGrath's households. Major findings of this survey are listed below.

Population Growth and Distribution

- The population of McGrath is expected to be relatively stable; average anticipated length of stay of respondents is approximately 10 years.
- A large majority (70%) of respondents indicate "indefinite or permanent" plans to remain in McGrath.
- 70% of respondents favor maintaining present population levels; 25% favor growth.

McGrath's resident public health nurse serves a regional population of 750, at clinics in nearby villages and at the McGrath Health Center.

Housing

- Most residents (65%) feel there is a shortage of adequate housing in McGrath, especially high priced rentals.
- All survey respondents prefer to live in single-family detached units.
- Three-fifths of the dwellings in McGrath are owner occupied.
- High income households (over \$30,000 per year) prefer higher priced rental units. This group also expressed the greatest dissatisfaction with available housing.
- More than one-third of the respondents feel that McGrath should not be involved in any regional economic expansion; another one-third would limit McGrath's potential involvement to serving only as a regional center for such expansion.
- A majority (65%) favor city regulation of construction of buildings in areas of natural or manmade hazards.
- Half of the total sample would like larger (about 1-acre) residential lots.
- 70% of respondents believe that the city should enact subdivision standards.
- 70% believe that the contractor of a new subdivision should be required to provide roads and electric power to its units.

Culture, Heritage and Lifestyle

- Half of all respondents work year round; the other 50% work on a seasonal basis that averages four to six months per year.
- 13% of the sample indicated a knowledge or understanding of a Native language.
- The factors perceived as most important in preserving McGrath's culture include maintenance of the community's small size; protection of the "community bond;" education of children in the values of the region; preservation of the subsistence resources; and continuation of McGrath's physical isolation from the outside world.
- About three-fourths of all respondents supplement some portion of their food budget with subsistence resources.

Economic Development and Employment

- The survey indicates that approximately 65% of all household goods purchased by McGrath residents are directly imported and are not supplied through local retail or wholesale sources.
- Most respondents express a strong desire for more local services provided by the private sector.
- 70% of the sample desire no change in McGrath's economy or population.
- Locally provided advanced vocational courses are strongly desired.
- Lack of opportunities for career progression and inadequate vocational training are the main reasons listed for leaving/moving from McGrath.
- Industrial activities perceived as most suitable for increased development in McGrath include the timber industry and light maintenance industries (engine service and repair, for example).
- Slightly more than half the sample feels that McGrath should play a regional role in resource industry development. A majority of those favoring such a role prefer that it be limited to that of transportation/communication and supply center.
- Few residents desire a major tourist industry in McGrath. Should a tourist industry be developed, respondents see a need for additional lodging and improved transportation facilities.
- Regional tours and an improved local museum are suggested as the only desirable kinds of tourism.
- Oil production is perceived as the industry least compatible with McGrath's valuable subsistence resources.



Jet service to and from Anchorage is provided 3 times a week by a Wien Air Alaska 737.

THE PHYSICAL AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

Soils and Permafrost — A typical soil profile of the townsite consists of organic silt and silt to 10-foot depths, underlain from 10 to 25 feet by sand and silty sand. Permafrost generally occurs at shallow depths on north-facing slopes, in poorly drained areas on the floodplain and in places affected by seepage. These lands are more conducive to farming and recreational uses than to construction uses that disrupt the lower soil strata. Well-drained sites suitable for development comprise less than 5% of the total land area of the townsite.

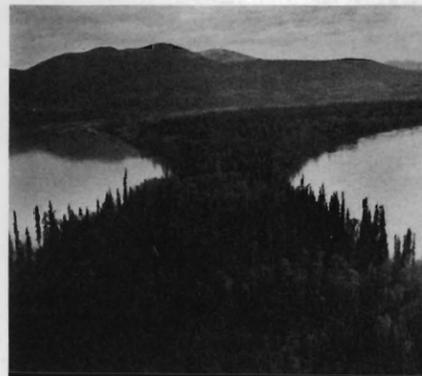
The Kuskokwim River — This is the largest river in Alaska, draining entirely from within the state. The river is open to limited navigation from mid-May to late October. Normal river elevation near McGrath is 334 feet above sea level. All landforms within the floodplain on which McGrath is located originated as alluvial deposits laid down by the meandering, silt-laden Kuskokwim River.

The river is the most active environmental process of the region and affects nearly all aspects of community life in McGrath. The natural processes of deposition, flooding, ice-jamming and riverbank erosion are all integral parts of the river's ongoing attempts to reshape the landscape. To minimize possible costs to life and property, future community development must recognize the inevitability of these processes and plan accordingly.

Flooding — Major flooding and shifting of the river channel are facts of life in the McGrath area. Historical records indicate that flooding occurred in 1920, 1921, 1927, 1933, 1964, 1972 and 1976, often resulting in considerable damage.

The present townsite of McGrath lies entirely within the floodplain of the Kuskokwim River. A report prepared in 1977 by the Alaska District Corps of Engineers concluded that the flood hazard in McGrath is high, with 100% inundation of the community to be expected every 5 to 20 years.

Development of flood-prone properties by private and public agencies continues to occur, even though damage to the community and residual effects of former floods indicate that further development of the present townsite is ill advised.



The gradual erosion of this oxbow neck will hasten erosion processes and will eventually strand the present townsite. (See "Relocation Feasibility Study" in plan.)

Riverbank Erosion — Erosion of the Kuskokwim riverbanks poses an even more persistent threat than flooding. Riverbank cutting is currently destroying property along the eastern edge of town near the end of Takotna Avenue and south of town near

McGrath is largely black spruce with mosses and sedges in the wet lowlands, and some birch on the higher, drier ground. The well-drained soils of the natural levees, including Cranberry Ridge, support stands of white spruce suitable for commercial use. Paper birch, quaking aspen, balsam poplar, cottonwood and willow are also scattered throughout the region and reflect either the occurrence of well-drained sites or the "nursery crop" in a burned area following a forest fire.

Undergrowth around the McGrath area is generally dense, consisting of high and low shrubs including alder, willow, rose, Labrador tea, and berry bushes. The forest floor is usually carpeted with ferns, bluejoint, fireweed, horsetails, lichens, herbs, and moss.

Subsistence vegetation includes berries (blue, cran, salmon, straw), fireweed, rose hips, sourdoch, spruce root and wild mushrooms.

The soils immediately around McGrath provide habitat for a large variety of wildlife, especially migrating waterfowl that use the wet areas for nesting. Moose are the most abundant land mammal. Other land mammals include black bear, barren ground caribou, bison (near Farewell), and wolves.

All five species of Pacific salmon are found in the area. Whitefish, sheefish, rainbow trout, pike, Arctic char, and Dolly Varden are also found here.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY

Ancestors of the upper Kuskokwim Athapaskans were the first people to settle in the region. By late prehistoric times, the new site of Old Town McGrath on the west bank of the Kuskokwim had become a temporary meeting place for the Athapaskans from the nearby villages of Big River, Nikolai and Telida, and for the Tanana Indians from nearby Lake Minchumina.

During the 18th century, exploration and travel in the upper Kuskokwim region were limited to Russian and U.S. adventurers and scientists. With the discovery of gold in 1906 in the neighboring Innoko District, a stampede of miners rushed to the area. Recognizing the trade potential of the strategic location of Old McGrath on the river, Abraham Appel in 1904 established a trading post, the earliest recorded permanent settlement at McGrath.

Although it was not the geographic center of gold rush activity, McGrath was the northernmost point on the Kuskokwim River accessible to the large riverboats that supplied the gold country. Its proximity to the well-traveled Iditarod Trail also contributed to McGrath's success as a regional center.

Most large-scale gold mining in the region declined sharply after 1925. Regular air mail service, initiated in 1924 by Carl Ben Eielson, further strengthened McGrath's role as a sub-regional transportation and service center. The growth of the public service sector during World War II and the creation of the Iditarod School District in 1976 helped to further sustain McGrath's character as a subregional transportation and service center.

Major flooding of the original townsite on the east bank of the Kuskokwim forced a relocation of the community in the 1930's. By 1940, the new townsite was firmly established on the west bank.

Today, residents characterize McGrath as a small town community that enjoys a strong bond amongst its citizens. Many McGrath residents depend on subsistence activities for at least a portion of their food budget. Maintenance of the small size and isolation of the community is perceived as critical to the preservation of the present culture and lifestyle.

ECONOMY AND POPULATION

Economy — Since the economy is a driving force behind change in a community, plans for the future management of local resources must be founded upon a thorough understanding of the local economy. If such plans are to be kept current with changing economic conditions, the analytical approach taken must also permit constant and continued measurement of potential impacts associated with expected economic change.

For this plan, a series of economic forecasts were derived, using a computerized economic model. This model examined the relationships among different industries in McGrath and the economic impacts these industries have on one another. Forecasts were derived for a most likely level of economic activity. The forecasts included information on employment,

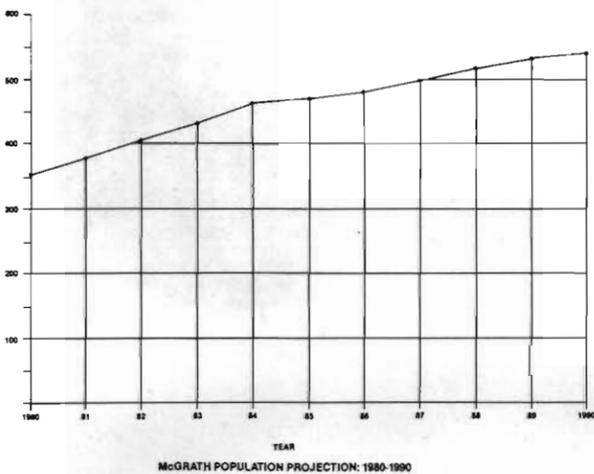
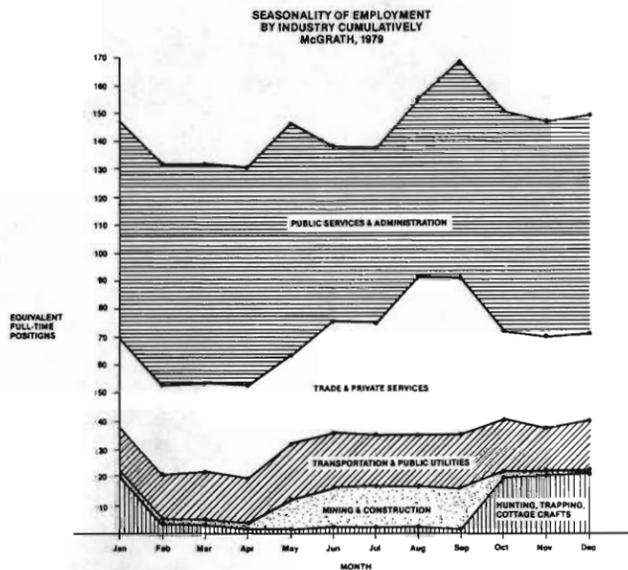
income, and occupation/skill levels. They were used to project population growth and evaluate the associated land use, housing, and community service requirements.

In assessing these forecasts, it must be stressed that they are based on assumptions made about the primary sources of change. Should the primary sources of change not occur as expected, the forecasts must, of necessity, be changed to accommodate this new information.

For purposes of this plan, the McGrath economy was divided into five industrial categories: hunting, trapping and cottage crafts; mining and construction; transportation and public utilities; trade and private services; and public services and administration.

State and federal governments directly or indirectly provide 90% of McGrath's economic base. Much of this amount is spent on public education and summer firefighting in the region. The unusually strong effects of state and federal revenues are due in part to the size of the public services and administration industry. In fiscal year 1979, the public services and administration sector brought more than \$1,817,300 into the community, almost 300% more than any other sector.

Although the public services sector produced the greatest total income, only the transportation and public utilities industry enjoys a stable year-round employment profile.



McGrath Population Projection: 1980-1990

McGrath Employment Projection: 1980-1990



EXISTING LAND USES
McGrath, Alaska 1980

LAND USE	ACREAGE*		RATIO: ACRES / PERSON	% OF DEVELOPED AREA	% OF TOTAL AREA
	ACRES	UNIMPROVED			
RESIDENTIAL			.15/1	48%	4%
IRHA SUBDIVISION	24.2	25			
WATERFRONT HSG.	6.3	20			
F.A.A. HOUSING	2.6	20			
PUBLIC HSG. / ELDERLY	.5	4			
TEACHER HOUSING	.4	2			
OTHER RESIDENTIAL	18.2	69			
TOTAL	52.2	140			
RETAIL/COMMERCIAL	4.5		.01/1	4	.3
INDUSTRIAL	1.5		.005/1	1	.1
PUBLIC / QUASI-PUBLIC	33.5		.1/1	30	2
ROADS IMPROVED	18.1	2	.05/1	19	2
UNIMPROVED	4.2				
TOTAL DEVELOPED AREA	114		.3/1	100	8
VACANT LAND	1300		3.7/1		92
TOTAL STUDY AREA	1414		4/1		100

* THESE ACREAGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS CALCULATED FROM FIELD SURVEY RESULTS FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF CONDUCTING A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIVE BEST USES FOR THE LAND IN THE COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CITY OF McGRATH.

THE PLAN

The land use plan presented on the opposite side of this foldout will represent official city policy when it is adopted by the city council. It should, therefore, be followed closely when deciding on the use and disposal of public and private property; designing subdivisions and street layouts; siting community facilities and preparing building and development codes and ordinances.

Several factors were taken into consideration in laying out this future land use plan. Existing land use, of course, was one of the more important ones. This is not to say every existing land use was necessarily followed in fixing future land use patterns. Rather, the layout was meant to provide for required community expansion of existing land use patterns in a logical way.

Other important considerations in developing the plan were: soils and erosion problems; the segregation or containment of incompatible or noxious land uses; the location of heavily used commercial and public use areas in a convenient and safe manner; and improving inter-community accessibility.

HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

McGrath's existing housing stock consists of 140 dwelling units, 107 single-family detached units, 3 trailers, 4 duplexes and 1 multi-family structure containing 4 units. Fifty-seven percent (or 79 units) were rated as housing in good to excellent condition in a May 1979 housing survey.

Most homes in McGrath (96%) are electrified, and only 47% have indoor plumbing. Public funds provided by HUD or FAA have sponsored the construction of more than 33% (51 units) of the total housing stock in the community.

One of the most critical issues in McGrath is the lack of adequate housing facilities. This housing shortage is the result of two factors:

- public funding has not been sufficient to keep up with the demand for residential units; and
- availability of land for private use has been limited.

Open Space/Recreational Land Use — The imminent threat of serious erosion problems and the need to provide buffer zones demand that certain portions of land in McGrath be reserved as open space. To this end, and in response to the community desire for accessible "developed" recreational space, an 8-acre recreational park is proposed on the southwestern edge of town. This park should include: an ice-skating rink, a baseball diamond, a dog mushers' run, a cross-country ski trail, and other desired recreational facilities. Several smaller neighborhood parks are also proposed. These parks will be immediately accessible and thus limit the amount of travel/street crossings smaller children might otherwise risk.

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Community Center — Future land requirements for new and expanded state, regional and local community facilities and services are estimated at an additional 6 to 7 acres by 1990. This will include an 8,000 sq. ft. community center jointly designed and built by the U.S. Public Health Service and City of McGrath that will be completed in late 1981. The center will include: a washeteria; a water treatment plant; public showers; a social services office; a general health clinic; a mental health clinic; a municipal garage; and a community hall. The old health clinic will be converted to a child care center in 1981.

Health Care Facilities and Services — McGrath is the regional health care center for a population of approximately 750. While the community is generally pleased with the quality of current services, it would prefer to have local facilities and personnel capable of providing a broader range of emergency care locally. The city has requested funding to achieve these ends.

The projected increase in population will intensify the need for a wider range of medical services. Recommendations for health care facilities and services are:

- an additional 400 sq. ft. of space adjacent to the new clinic in the community center be made available for use as a dental office;
- an additional 600 sq. ft. of space be made available for use as a resident physician's assistant (P.A.) office;
- the resident PHN nurse be licensed as a mid-level practitioner to perform a wider range of duties, thereby reducing the number of trips needed to Anchorage for emergency and general health care;
- an additional 600 square feet of space for use as a dental clinic.

Educational Facilities — In order to meet the needs of the 1990 population of 543, the Iditarod Area School District will need to construct an additional 10 classrooms at McGrath School. Four of the classrooms and kitchen facilities for a hot lunch program are scheduled for completion during the 1981 construction season. An 8,700-square-foot Iditarod Area School District office building/media center will be built in 1981 as well. The center will provide 15 offices for IASD personnel, a print shop, a photo lab, and a district-wide library/media center. Six additional classrooms will be added as needed according to the 1990 population projections. The University of Alaska plans to establish a Rural Education Center branch in this community. It is recommended that the center be sited on the McGrath school reserve in order to take advantage of existing educational resources.



During the 1981 construction season, the Iditarod Area School District plans to add 4 classrooms to the McGrath School.

accommodate expected growth to 1990. However, if a major new development is created on Cranberry Ridge, additional landfill and disposal space will be needed in the area.

Sewage Disposal — The disposal of raw sewage is a major problem at McGrath. About half of the households use a log crib or septic tank disposal system. Recent samples of water were found to contain significant amounts of bacteria. The city's first priority, then, should be to initiate soils testing to determine the extent of the sewage saturation problem.

The city is currently working with specialists to determine the best method of action. It is recommended that the city seek non-capital-intensive solutions to this problem as maintenance costs of a full-fledged sewage disposal system could be substantial.

TRANSPORTATION

Roads — Two specific circulation patterns are suggested by McGrath's location on a 100-year floodplain. First, a loop road surrounding the entire community is suggested to provide alternate access routes in time of flooding. Second, an emergency access road should be provided to higher ground in the event of a serious flood.

Many of the streets in McGrath are too narrow. Future planning of residential streets should require a minimum 50-foot right-of-way. This would allow for needed snow storage along the road and for the problems caused by discontinuous permafrost.

Acute street angles constitute another potential traffic hazard. The hazard of the less-than-60-degree intersection at Takotna and Chenana Avenues, in particular, should be corrected when Chenana Avenue becomes the major thoroughfare through town.

Pedestrian Traffic — Many residents rely on walking as a principal mode of transportation. As roads are developed, care should be taken to preserve pedestrian rights-of-way.

Snowmachine Traffic — Snowmachines provide another major form of transportation during the winter. For reasons of safety and noise reduction, a network of snowmachine trails has been suggested to lessen interference with other forms of transportation in the community.

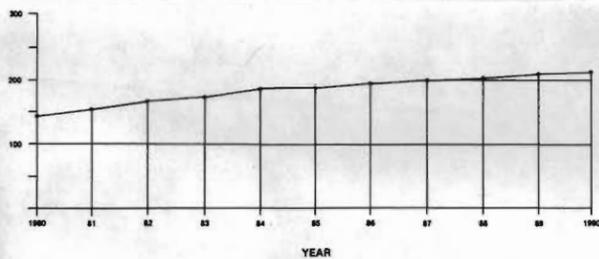
Air Transportation — McGrath's regional role as the center for air transportation facilities for the upper Kuskokwim area can be expected to increase in the future.

The dangerous proximity of the unrestricted airport apron creates problems. DOT/PF has allocated funds for a safer, properly sited apron. Construction of the planned apron, however, has been postponed, and the city should move to have the apron constructed as soon as possible. With the highest number of aircraft per capita in the state, McGrath also has a need for expanded small aircraft facilities.



The FAA flight service station makes McGrath one of the best equipped airports in the upper Kuskokwim region.

Marine Transportation — As a regional distribution center, McGrath handles an inordinate amount of marine-borne cargo. Almost all of the community's fuel supplies and some heavy equipment arrive via river barge. Ninety-five percent of the river freight to McGrath is bulk fuel. Presently, these goods are offloaded at the east end of the taxiway. A dock feasibility study is to be conducted in 1981 to determine whether or not the community needs or could support a better local dock facility.



Population — The population of McGrath has increased slowly but consistently since 1939. The Federal Census of 1939 recorded 138 residents in McGrath. Eleven years later this figure climbed to 175. By 1960, the year the last inhabitants of Old Town McGrath moved to the new townsite, 241 people lived in McGrath. The current population stands at 353.

Unlike most rural Alaskan communities, McGrath has a fairly even mix of Native (47%) and non-Native (53%) residents. This compares to a 17 percent total Native population for the state of Alaska. Similarly, according to a 1979 survey taken by Darbyshire & Associates, sex distribution proves to be relatively even with 53 percent male and 47 percent female residents.

The median age for McGrath, 26 years, is noticeably higher than that recorded in 1979 for the Kuskokwim Census Division (19.9 years) or the state of Alaska (22.9 years). This discrepancy may be due to the large number of young professionals without families who are drawn to public service and administration jobs in this subregional center.

EXISTING LAND OWNERSHIP AND USE PATTERNS

While most of the land around McGrath was formerly owned by the federal government, the principal surface landowner now is the local Native corporation, MTNT, Ltd. Pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), the combined village corporations of McGrath, Takotna, Nikolai and Telida (MTNT, Ltd.) were entitled to select a total of 299,520 acres of land in the area. Accordingly, MTNT has selected all developable land within the 25-square-mile city limits of McGrath that is not already held in ownership by specific government agencies or private individuals.

Under Section 14(c) of ANCSA, the City of McGrath is entitled to reconveyance of some of the village corporation land for the following purposes: (1) existing homes, businesses and campsites, (2) non-profit organizations, and (3) the remaining land on which the community is located and as much additional land as is necessary for community expansion and rights-of-way for public use.

In the course of the development of the comprehensive plan, it has become clear that most of McGrath's future development should be directed to the higher ground at Cranberry Ridge. According to these recommendations, McGrath has made the following municipal selections:

- approximately 750 noncontiguous acres southwest of the present townsite and the base of Cranberry Ridge;
- five hundred acres on Cranberry Ridge extending southeast from the rims of the Ridge;
- the right-of-way and 20 adjacent acres for the Cranberry Ridge road.

An alternate grid system of land ownership has been established for acreage on Cranberry Ridge. This arrangement of alternate-site ownership guarantees that both the city and the village corporation will have access to the optimal lots along the Ridge.

Much of the land most appropriate for community expansion related to future public facilities is currently owned by DOT/PF, State of Alaska. The state has agreed to lease and/or sell much of the land targeted by the city as sites for future community facilities.

Within the 1,414-acre Study Area, there are 114 acres of developed land. A breakdown of this existing land use is shown in the next column.

- public funding has not been sufficient to keep up with the demand for residential units; and
- availability of land for private use has been limited.



Of the 140 housing units in McGrath, 107 are single-family detached homes.

Future Housing Needs and Residential Land Use — Within the next 10 years, McGrath will need increases in the overall number of housing units, the average size of residential lots, and the total percentage of residential acreage in the community. By 1990, it is estimated that approximately 215 single-family dwelling units will be required to accommodate a population of 543 people. This means that an additional 113 new and/or replacement housing units will have to be constructed by then. Approximately 122 additional acres of land will be needed for this residential development.

Should land not become available at Cranberry Ridge for community relocation, the following guidelines should be followed for residential expansion:

- the development phasing (I, II, III and IV) suggested on the plan should be followed;
- no housing should be sited within the hazard zone at the neck of the oxbow;
- all housing sites should be at least 100 yards from the riverbank;
- residences requiring fuel delivery should have year-round road access;
- the highest possible elevations should be chosen for residential construction;
- development should be limited to areas with the least permafrost problems;
- dwelling units should be sited, whenever possible, to have a southern exposure;

Commercial Land Use — In order to meet the demands of the projected 1990 population, an additional 4.5 acres will be needed for commercial uses. To satisfy this demand, it is recommended that:

- future business expansion occur in or adjacent to the existing core area. This should prove most convenient and serve to encourage an increase in the level and variety of services offered locally. It will also discourage unnecessary vehicular traffic through residential areas.
- several neighborhood convenience shopping areas be provided. This will allow immediate access to more frequently needed convenience goods.

Industrial Land Use — The predicted increase in mining and construction activity will require an increased amount of land for industrial use. Specifically, there will be a need for mining and construction equipment storage areas, increased fuel storage areas and increased electric generation capacity. A new and improved docking facility will also be required to better accommodate the loading and offloading of large equipment and other goods.

A 4-acre industrial park has thus been proposed for the area just east of the southernmost terminus of the airstrip. A proposed pipeline for fuel transfer has also been sited to extend from the edge of the airstrip to the bulk fuel storage tanks at the industrial park and eventually to the commercial distribution points near the airport and the north end of town.



During the 1981 construction season, the Iditarod Area School District plans to add 4 classrooms to the McGrath School.

Cultural Facilities — Efforts are underway to establish an historical and cultural museum to preserve the rich local Athapaskan history and the artifacts of the mining days of the late 1800's. The existing community hall and school gym meet the city's needs for most other social and cultural activities.

PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Local Fire Suppression — Existing and proposed firefighting equipment and storage facilities are adequate to meet the community's needs through 1990. Water available for fire suppression is, however, limited. Additional watering points and hoses are therefore recommended to increase the fire department's range of service.

Police and Emergency Medical Protection — A well-developed, more direct communications system is needed for reaching the resident state trooper when he is absent. The local policeman and the Kuskokwim Valley Rescue Squad would also benefit from a central dispatching system guaranteeing 24-hour service, should the EMT squad's current communications arrangement with the FAA flight service station be eliminated by the FAA's move from McGrath.

Regional Fire Suppression — The Department of Natural Resources has requested that 25 acres of land be relinquished to the Division of Forest, Land and Water Management for the regional administration of fire suppression activities in McGrath. Due to the similarity of the fire suppression operations of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the two agencies should fully cooperate in the use of certain facilities. Cooperation would reduce significantly the amount of land (70 acres, currently) required at the McGrath townsite for regional fire suppression activities. Due to the shortage of land, it is recommended that BLM relinquish a 25-acre parcel south of and adjacent to the BLM complex for these purposes. Preliminary analysis shows that a total of 50 acres would allow both BLM and DNR to meet their respective service mandates.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife plans to establish an information center and headquarters in McGrath for the Innoko Wildlife Refuge within the next 2 to 4 years. Land near the new terminal site has been set aside for this purpose in the proposed land use plan.

Electricity and Fuel Oil — Until alternative hydro or other energy resources are developed, McGrath will have to rely upon imported fuel sources for locally generated electricity. It is thus recommended that:

- the city continue to seek public subsidy of its utility rates while every effort is made to develop alternative energy sources.
- the city take necessary actions to limit the need for air transport of fuel supplies.
- the community seek to provide 1,600,000 gallons of fuel storage by 1990.

Water — In addition to the central watering point, water treatment plant, washeteria and public showers at the new Community Center, the city is also served by a central watering point at the northern border of the new housing subdivision. An additional wintertime central watering point is proposed just west of the point where A Street deadends at the riverbank. It is recommended that a hole be drilled in the ice here and maintained through the winter to allow for easy access to water for fire suppression purposes at the densely populated north end of town. Other than these 3 central watering points, most of the community will continue to be served by individual wells.

Solid Waste Disposal — The combination solid waste disposal site/ sanitary landfill operated by the city is sufficient to

Marine Transportation — As a regional distribution center, McGrath handles an inordinate amount of marine-borne cargo. Almost all of the community's fuel supplies and some heavy equipment arrive via river barge. Ninety-five percent of the river freight to McGrath is bulk fuel. Presently, these goods are offloaded at the east end of the taxiway. A dock feasibility study is to be conducted in 1981 to determine whether or not the community needs or could support a better local dock facility. A site east of the southern terminus of the runway is currently proposed.



Barges bring freight (primarily bulk fuel) from Seattle via Bethel 3 to 6 times each summer.

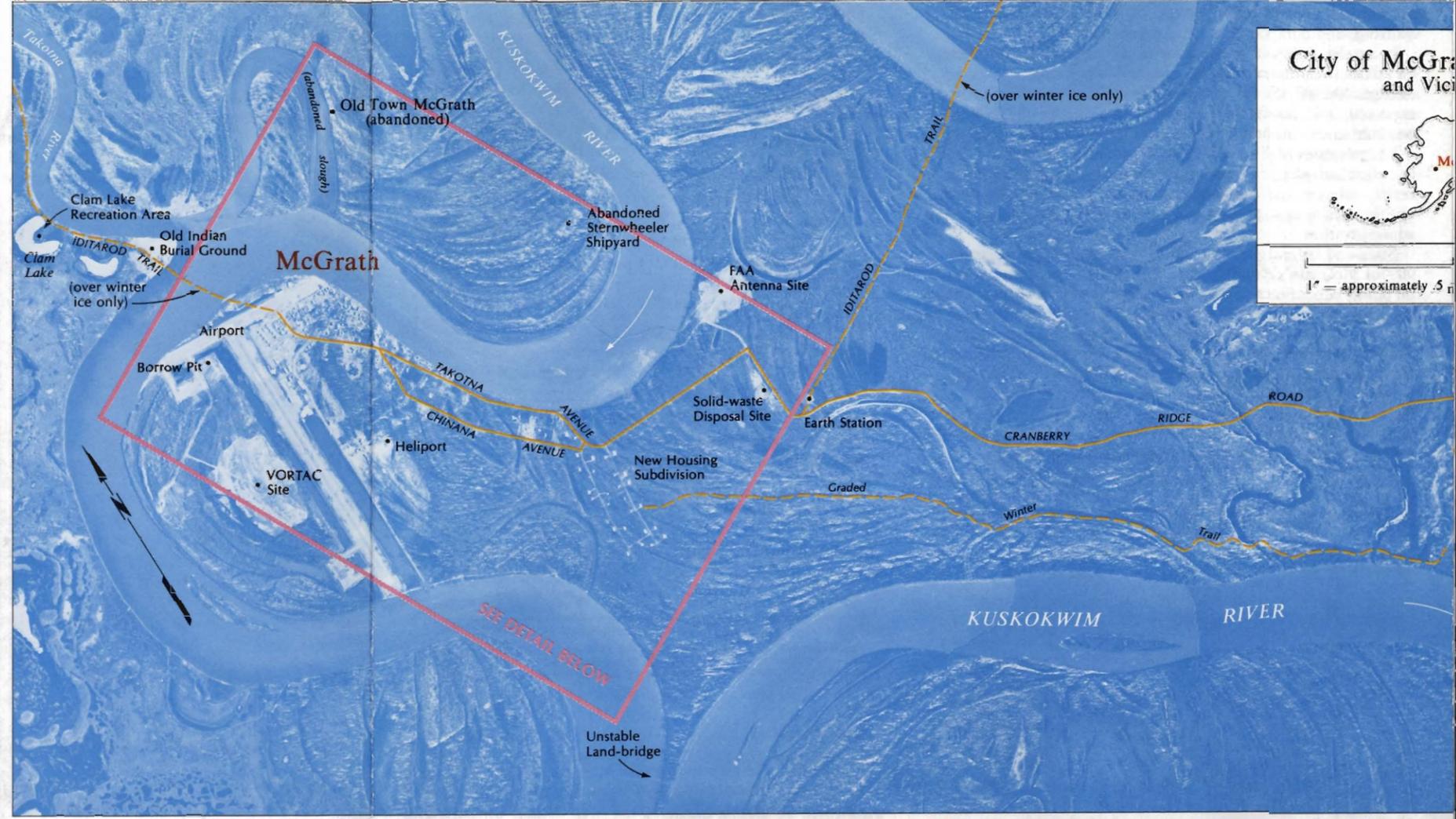
PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The preparation of a community comprehensive development plan accomplishes nothing unless it is followed by a program of implementation. This segment summarizes recommendations the city should pursue to make its plan a reality.

- The City of McGrath should move immediately to prepare a detailed Capital Improvements Program (CIP).
- A land use permit system should be initiated as an interim plan implementation tool until a decision is made by the planning commission and the city council as to which of the alternative implementation strategies presented in the plan they wish to employ.
- The council should officially adopt the comprehensive plan by ordinance based on the recommendations of the planning commission.
- In addition to the city administrator and the policeman currently employed by the city, municipal staff should be expanded to include:
 - 1 assistant city administrator/planner;
 - 1 bookkeeper/purchasing agent;
 - 1 maintenance supervisor; and
 - 2 additional full-time maintenance persons.
- The support the city provides its planning operation should be increased to a level which will allow the office to meet the following responsibilities:
 - provide technical assistance to the planning commission;
 - guide all future development so that it meets the needs of the community as detailed in the comprehensive plan;
 - review all subdivision proposals;
 - prepare and administer the subdivision platting when necessary;
 - monitor state and federal planning program in McGrath;
 - administer planning consulting contracts;
 - serve as city landsman;
 - administration of municipal parks and recreation programs;
 - administration of alternative energy development programs;
 - develop funding sources for planning/engineering of future community expansion on Cranberry Ridge;
 - review and update the city's comprehensive plan every 2 years.

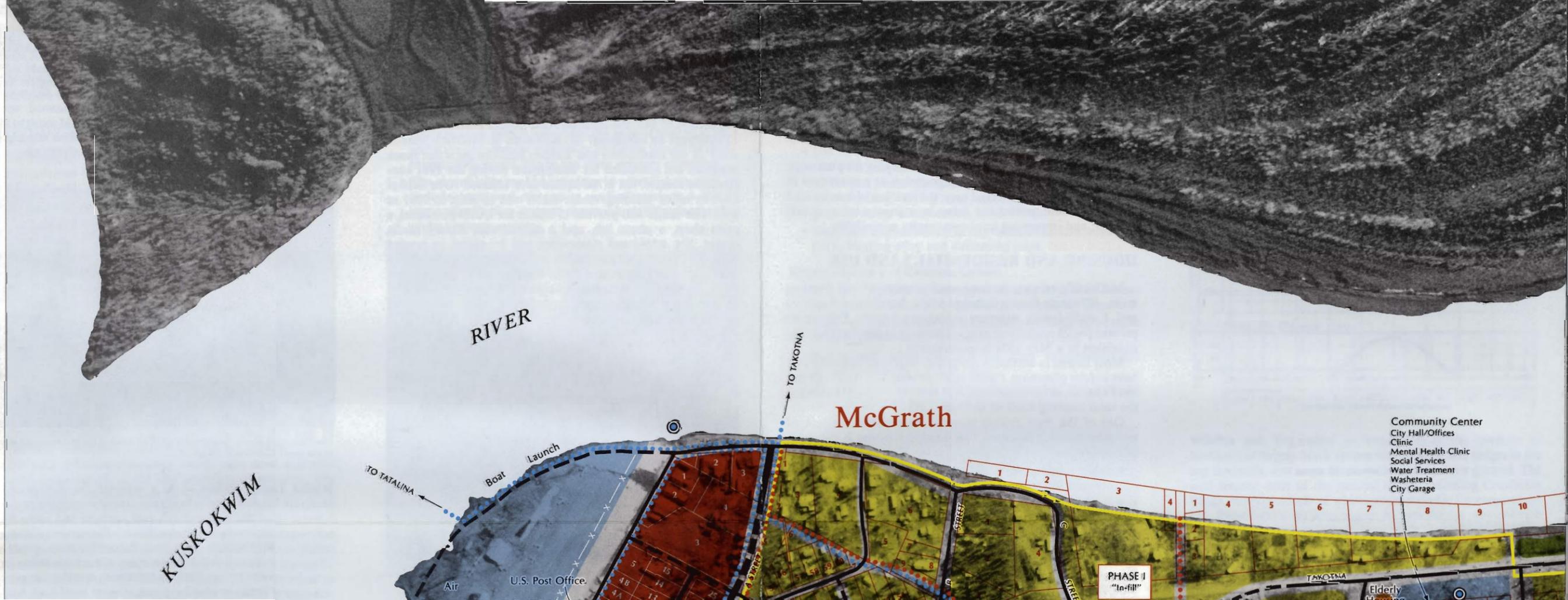


Old Town McGrath
(abandoned)



City of McGrath
and Vicinity

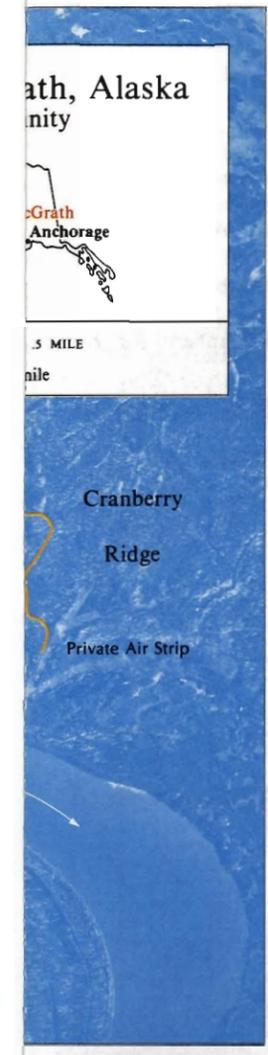
1" = approximately .5 miles



McGrath

- Community Center
- City Hall/Offices
- Clinic
- Mental Health Clinic
- Social Services
- Water Treatment
- Washeteria
- City Garage

PHASE I
"In-fill"



FAA Antenna Site

GRANBERRY
RIDGE
ROAD

Sanitary Landfill/
Solid-waste Disposal

The preparation of this plan was financed in part through a legislative appropriation to the City of McGrath, administered by the Division of Community Planning, Alaska State Department of Community and Regional Affairs; in part by the Farmers Home Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture; and in part by the City of McGrath.

NOTE: To avoid any confusion, it should be remembered that a land use plan is not a zoning map; it does not show, or intend to show, the exact outline of zoning districts or the exact location of streets and other public facilities. Furthermore, a land use plan does not take, and is not intended to take, any land for public purposes or require that any property be sold or dedicated to public use. Rather, a land use plan is intended to suggest a general pattern for orderly and efficient land use development and should be used to complement normal community land acquisition procedures to secure land for public purposes.

The Summary Plan City of McGrath, Alaska

Proposed Land Use Map

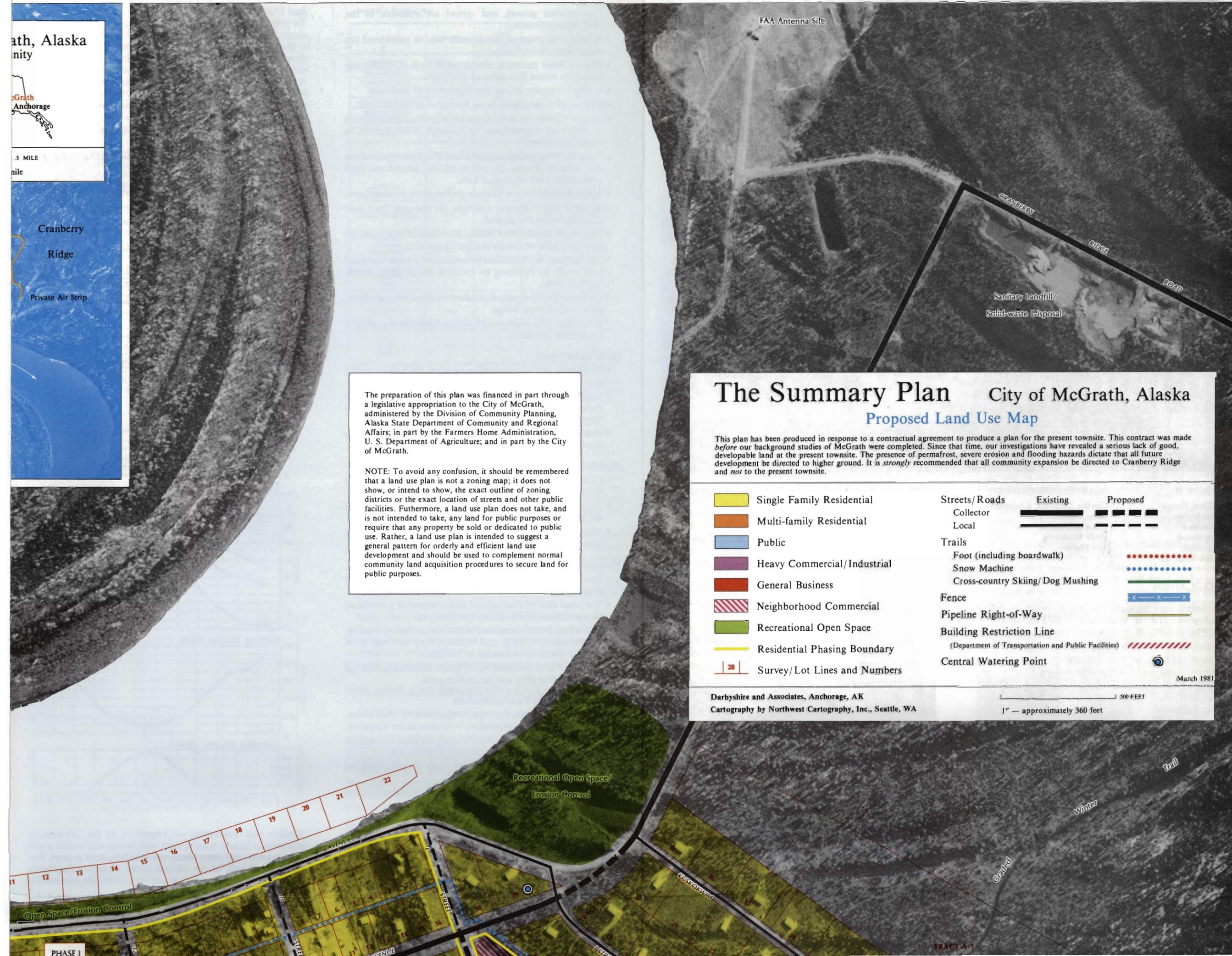
This plan has been produced in response to a contractual agreement to produce a plan for the present townsite. This contract was made before our background studies of McGrath were completed. Since that time, our investigations have revealed a serious lack of good, developable land at the present townsite. The presence of permafrost, severe erosion and flooding hazards dictate that all future development be directed to higher ground. It is *strongly* recommended that all community expansion be directed to Cranberry Ridge and *not* to the present townsite.

 Single Family Residential	Streets/Roads	Existing	Proposed
 Multi-family Residential	Collector		
 Public	Local		
 Heavy Commercial/Industrial	Trails		
 General Business	Foot (including boardwalk)		
 Neighborhood Commercial	Snow Machine		
 Recreational Open Space	Cross-country Skiing/ Dog Mushing		
 Residential Phasing Boundary	Fence		
 Survey/Lot Lines and Numbers	Pipeline Right-of-Way		
	Building Restriction Line		
	(Department of Transportation and Public Facilities)		
	Central Watering Point		

March 1981

Darbyshire and Associates, Anchorage, AK
Cartography by Northwest Cartography, Inc., Seattle, WA

500 FEET
1" — approximately 360 feet



McGrath

KUSKOKWIM

- Community Center
- City Hall/Offices
- Clinic
- Mental Health Clinic
- Social Services
- Water Treatment
- Washeteria
- City Garage

