



CITY OF WASILLA

290 E. HERNING AVE.
WASILLA, ALASKA 99654-7091
PHONE: (907) 373-9050
FAX: (907) 373-9085

COUNCIL MEMORANDUM NO. 96-37

From: Duane Dvorak, City Planner 

Date: April 3, 1996

Subject: Planning Commission Recommendation to Rezone Lease Lots 1 through 9, New Wasilla Airport Subdivision, from IND--Industrial to CA--Core Area.

The Wasilla Planning Commission initiated this investigation on its own motion in accordance with Section 16.43.451. Commission Resolution No. 96-11, recommending the above referenced rezone was adopted at the April 2, 1996 regular Commission meeting.

Staff has attached the staff report and backup materials considered by the Commission in developing this recommendation for rezone. A map showing the relation of Lease Lots 1 through 9, to the remainder of New Wasilla Airport Subdivision is included with this information.

The purpose of this rezone is to provide more flexibility in the development of needed airport support services and structures. The lease lots average just over an acre each, on average. The 25 foot setback from all exterior lot lines is considered to be excessive for lots this size.

The CA--Core Area district permits commercial and light industrial uses. Heavy industrial uses would not be allowed on the lease lots if this rezone is approved. It seems unlikely that heavy industrial uses would be developed on lots this size.

Draft Ordinance, Serial No. 96-20, has been prepared for introduction, should the Council favorably consider the Planning Commission's recommendation. If the Council has any questions about the request or the development districts involved, please contact the City Planner at 373-9094.



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WASILLA PLANNING COMMISSION RESOLUTION NO. 96-11

A RESOLUTION OF THE WASILLA PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WASILLA, ALASKA, RECOMMENDING THE ADOPTION OF AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE OFFICIAL WASILLA ZONING MAP TO REFLECT A CHANGE OF ZONING FOR LOTS 1 - 9, NEW WASILLA AIRPORT SUBDIVISION, IND--INDUSTRIAL TO CA--CORE AREA.

WHEREAS, a request to investigate the rezone of 9 lease lots in New Wasilla Airport Subdivision from IND--Industrial to CA--Core Area was initiated by the Wasilla Planning Commission (WPC) on March 19, 1996, and,

WHEREAS, a duly advertised public hearing was held on April 2, 1996, to consider this request; and,

WHEREAS, the WPC deliberated on this request, taking into account the recommendation of the staff, the public testimony - both written and verbal, the applicable provisions of the 1992 Wasilla Comprehensive Plan, and other pertinent information; and

WHEREAS, the WPC now wishes to forward this request for rezone to the Wasilla City Council along with a recommendation for approval, as follows:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Wasilla Planning Commission of the City of Wasilla, hereby forwards to the Wasilla City Council, Case R96-16, a request to rezone Lots 1 - 9, New Wasilla Airport Subdivision, IND--Industrial to CA--Core Area; and,

Furthermore, the Wasilla Planning Commission recommends approval of this request and bases its recommendation upon the following findings:

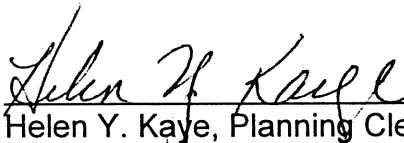
1. The contiguous lot area of the 9 lots identified in this request is well in excess of the 2 acre minimum area required for a rezone under the provisions of the Wasilla Development Code.
2. The CA--Core Area development district permits land uses and development densities that are consistent with the goals and intent of the 1992 City of Wasilla Comprehensive Plan for the New Wasilla Airport.
3. The rezone will not increase the potential for traffic generation in the area.

4. The prevailing lot sizes, topography and land suitability can accommodate the types of development permitted within the CA--Core Area development district.
5. The rezone will not create any "conforming pre-existing uses".

I certify that a resolution in substantially the above form was passed by a majority of those voting at a duly called and conducted meeting of the Wasilla Planning Commission this 2 day of April, 1996.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

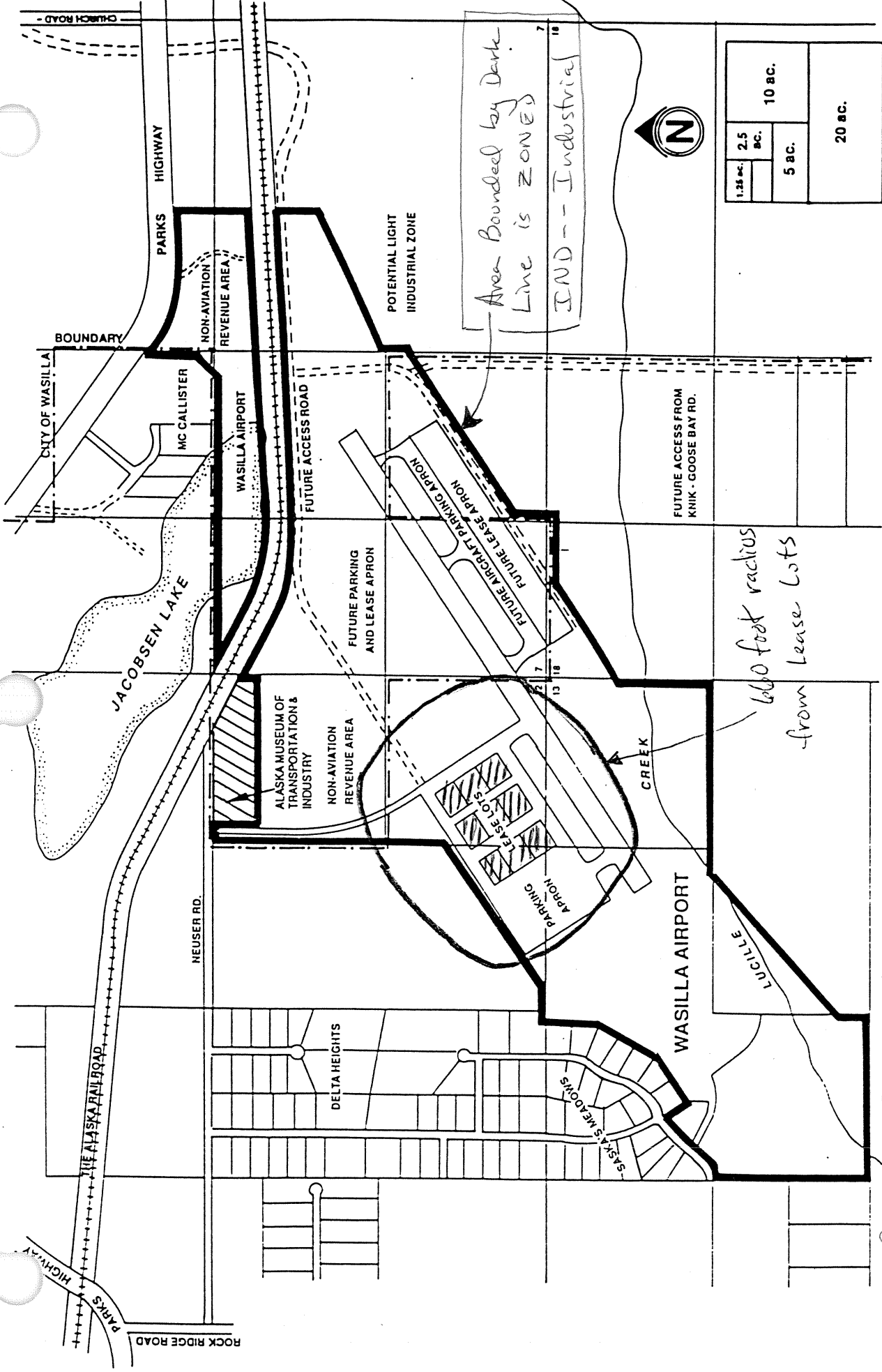
APPROVED:



Helen Y. Kaye, Planning Clerk



John A. Cannon, Chair



1.25 ac.	2.5 ac.	10 ac.
	5 ac.	
		20 ac.

40 acres

1/4 mile

Case R96-16

▨ = Proposed CA-Core Area Development District

Figure 30 NEW WASILLA AIRPORT PLAN




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Public Hearing Item 7-A

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 29, 1996
TO: Wasilla Planning Commission
FROM: Duane Dvorak, City Planner 
SUBJECT: Information for the April 2, 1996 Regular Meeting

CASE: R96-16

APPLICANT: Wasilla Planning Commission

OWNERS: City of Wasilla

REQUEST: Request to investigate the rezone of 9 Lease Lots located at the New Wasilla Airport from IND--Industrial to CA--Core Area.

LOCATION: Lots 1 - 9, New Wasilla Lease Lots. Generally located on the northwest side of the New Wasilla Airport runway.

ZONING: IND--Industrial

Public notice was distributed on March 27, 1996 and published in a newspaper of general circulation.

Date of site visit: March 29, 1996

1. Zoning History: Lots 1 - 9, New Wasilla Airport Lease Lots were rezoned from I--Intermediate to IND--Industrial as a result of Wasilla Ordinance Serial No. 92-17. This same ordinance also rezoned the balance of the New Wasilla Airport site from I--Intermediate to IND--Industrial.

2. Lot Size:

Lots size ranges from 45,000 square feet to about 53,000 square feet per lot. The three lots closest to the main taxiway are the larger 53,000 square foot lots. Lot 1 provides 44 10 by 20 foot off-street parking spaces. These spaces are intended to serve the tie-down area to the southeast of the lease lot area.

- 3. Existing Land Use: Lot 6 - Aircraft Repair Hangar
Lots 1 - 5 and 7-9 - Vacant
- 4. Surrounding Land Use and Zoning:

The New Wasilla Airport Lease Lots are completely surrounded by the New Wasilla Airport which is zoned IND--Industrial.

- 5. Comprehensive Plan: The 1992 Wasilla Comprehensive Plan identifies this area for airport support service development and airport related activities and land uses.
- 6. Applicable Regulations: The following sections of Title 16 (Wasilla Development Code) of the Wasilla Municipal Code are applicable to this request:

Rezoning

16.43.451 Initiation. A rezoning may be initiated by the City Planner, the **City Planning Commission**, the City Council, or a majority in interest of the owners of the land. (Ord. 94-41 Attachment "A")

16.43.455 Procedure.

A. A rezoning shall follow the procedure set out in Sections 16.43.501 through 16.43.521 for major development, except that the Commission's decision is only a recommendation to the Council. As soon as possible after receipt of the Commission recommendation, the Council shall determine whether it will consider a rezoning. If it determines to consider a rezoning, it shall request an ordinance implementing its decision be introduced as soon as possible and shall give notice and hold hearings as required for ordinances.

B. Upon the effective date of any rezoning, the City Planner shall cause the official zoning map to be changed, to reflect the adoption of the ordinance. A zone change that requires an amendment to this chapter as provided in subsection C of this section does not take effect until the effective date of the City ordinance that is required.

Core Area District

16.43.340 Intent. The CA district governs the Core Area of Wasilla, which contains the main highways and arterial streets, and the major multifamily, commercial, office and industrial areas of the City. It generally includes the areas served by City water and sewer service and is appropriate for continued development as the commercial and service hub of the Valley. (Ord. 94-41 Attachment "A")

16.43.341 Uses-By-Right. The following are uses-by-right in the CA district: residential uses except mobile homes, and accessory uses and structures normally appurtenant to uses-by-right and conditional uses, including, but not limited to signs, garages and required parking areas; except that any-use-by right that would otherwise be a major development must obtain a major development permit. (Ord. 94-41 Attachment "A")

16.43.342 Conditional Uses. The following uses are conditional uses: any uses which are not uses-by-right or prohibited uses; subdivisions, criminal transition facilities. (Ord. 94-41 Attachment "A"; Ord. 95-14 §3 1995))

16.43.343 Prohibited Uses And Structures. Heavy industrial uses and salvage yards are prohibited.

IND Industrial District

16.43.360 Intent. The IND district governs only areas of twenty acres or more. IND Districts must be served by major highways or collector streets and public or community water or sewer. The designation must contain specific provisions for traffic circulation and buffering of nearby non-industrial areas and uses from traffic, noise, dust, vibration, glare, pollution, and unsightly uses or activities. (Ord. 94-41 Attachment "A")

16.43.361 Uses-By-Right. The following are uses-by-right in the IND district: retail, office, public/institutional (except public residential or institutional residential uses) light industrial uses, and accessory uses and structures normally appurtenant to uses-by-right and conditional uses, including, but not limited to signs, garages and required parking areas; except any use-by-right that would otherwise be a major development must obtain a major development permit. (Ord. 94-41 Attachment "A"; Ord. 95-14 §4 1995)

16.43.362 Conditional Uses. Subdivisions, salvage yards and all other uses and structures which are not uses-by-right or prohibited uses are conditional uses. (Ord. 94-41 Attachment "A")

16.43.363 Prohibited Uses And Structures. Residential uses are prohibited in the IND district. (Ord. 94-41 Attachment "A")

16.43.364 Water And Sewer. All development must connect to a public or community water and sewer system. (Ord. 94-41 Attachment "A")

16.43.851 Lot Area.

B. Minimum lot area and floor area ratios for nonresidential development are as follows:

District	Minimum Lot Area	FAR
CA - industrial	200,000	0.4:1
CA - other	20,000	0.4:1
IND	20,000	0.4:1

The minimum lot area may not be less than the area required by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. Nonresidential development may exceed the FAR limitation of the section under the intensity bonus system set out in Sections 16.43.557 and 16.43.559 of this chapter. (Ord. 94-41 Attachment "A")

16.43.853 Setback Requirements.

D. Other setbacks are as follows:

District	Front	Side	Rear
CA- Nonres.	10	none or 10	none or 10
IND	25	25	25

Nonresidential structures in the CA District may be constructed on the property line; however, a structure that is not constructed on the property line must be set back at least ten feet from the property line. (Ord. 94-41 Attachment "A")

COMMENTS

The purpose of this request is to investigate the possible rezone of 9 lease lots at the New Wasilla Airport. After reviewing the intent of the IND--Industrial development district and related development standards, it does not appear to be the best choice of districts to regulate the development of airport lease lots. The lease lots at the New Wasilla Airport were created to provide for airport support services and airport related activities and land use. The prevailing lots sizes are not conducive to the development of most industrial land uses which generally requires much more than a one acre lot.

The IND--Industrial development district requires a 25 foot setback from all lot boundaries. These setbacks are excessive for most commercial uses that would be likely to develop on the airport lease lots. Lots in the CA--Core Area district require a 10 foot setback from lots lines along the right-of-way and a zero or 10 foot setback from interior lot lines.

Both lots mention the need for City water and sewer. In the CA--Core Area this is expressed in the intent. In the IND--Industrial district it is stated more plainly as a requirement in Section 16.43.364 (Water and Sewer) of the Wasilla Development Code. In fact, the New Wasilla Airport does not have City water and sewer systems in place at this time. A change in zoning will have no impact on this inconsistency. The CA district may encourage more development at the airport, however, thereby creating a demand for water and wastewater services that may someday justify the expense of developing a system to serve airport developments.

Any commercial land use that can be developed in the CA district can be developed in the IND district. The only uses that would be eliminated by this rezone would be heavy industrial uses. There should be no change to the potential for traffic generation, signage and other development related accessory uses to development.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff believes that the rezone requested will go a long way towards achieving the goals for the airport envisioned in the Wasilla Comprehensive Plan. Staff recommends that the Commission forward this case to the City Council with a recommendation for approval.

APPROPRIATE MOTION

Should the Commission agree with the recommendation of staff, the following motion is appropriate.

Move to adopt Resolution No. 96-11, recommending the rezone of Lease Lots 1 - 9, New Wasilla Airport, and to forward this recommendation to the Wasilla City Council for further consideration as an ordinance to amend the official City zoning map.

- ◆ Bus service, at a fraction of the capital costs, could meet commuting needs between the Valley and Anchorage;
- ◆ The railroad roadbed, especially between Eagle River and Anchorage, requires costly alignment improvements to attain speeds competitive with highway traffic; and
- ◆ The population base of the Valley was not large enough to warrant extensive investment in equipment and trackage improvements.

From the City's perspective, the railroad provides few benefits to the community. As part of this plan, it is recommended that the City and Borough work with the Alaska Railroad to facilitate the eventual realignment of the tracks south of the city. This would remove barriers to commercial development in the downtown area south of the tracks, and open up greater options for highway and parking improvements.

Air Transportation - The Old Airport

Wasilla's old airport is located in the middle of the commercial district just north of the Parks Highway. The facility is owned and operated by the State of Alaska. The existing 2,100 foot by 90 foot gravel runway fails to meet minimum FAA operational and safety standards for runway protection zones and transition zones at public airfields. In addition, commercial development next to the airport creates obstructions and nearby roads provide inadequate clearance for approach and departure zones. Residential areas and public schools are located below the flight path about one-half mile to the northeast.

The airfield is used mainly by private and student pilots, with very little commercial flying activity. The airfield is strictly VFR

(visual flight rules) and has no approach lighting. Commercial operators at the field offer aircraft maintenance, parts, gas sales and tie-down rentals. Major air frame and power plant repairs can be made, as well as FAA inspections. Other services, such as flight training, aircraft sales or other repairs must be obtained in Anchorage.

The State of Alaska offers six lease lots at a standard rate of \$.03 per square foot. No public tiedowns are available, although private tiedowns can be leased for about \$30 to \$35 per month from a commercial operation.

Within six months of the opening of the new airport in the summer of 1992, the FAA will require DOT&PF to decertify and close the existing airfield. The City anticipates that it will then receive title to the existing airfield property. A conceptual development plan for this site is included as part of the Land Use Plan.

Air Transportation - The New Wasilla Airport

Because of safety considerations, and in anticipation of future aviation growth, the community and the State of Alaska have worked over the past several years to relocate the airport out of downtown Wasilla.

The State recently completed construction of the new \$6.5 million, general aviation airport, located south of the Parks Highway, near Jacobsen Lake. This site was chosen after two separate airport site location studies and an environmental assessment. Unlike the existing airfield, the new airport will be turned over to the City of Wasilla, which will be responsible for its upkeep and maintenance. This section of the plan offers land use, facility and management guidelines to assist the City of Wasilla and the Wasilla Planning and Utilities

Commission in managing and planning for the new airport.

Access. Figure 30 shows existing and recommended airport access roads and land use. Present highway access to the airport is from the Parks Highway via Rocky Ridge Road and Neuser Drive. This access involves driving about four miles west on the Parks Highway and negotiating a high-speed left turn (without a turn lane) onto Rocky Ridge Road. There is currently no direct access between the airport and downtown Wasilla. While adequate for initial use of the airport, safe and convenient road access to downtown Wasilla is an important future transportation need. In addition, there is no road access to the new airport from the Knik-Goose Bay Road, that does not involve driving through Wasilla.

Two new access roads to the airport are recommended as part of this plan. First, Church Road should be extended across the Alaska Railroad mainline and west to the airport. DOT&PF estimates this option would cost \$1.45 million. Second, Mack Road should be developed northward from the Knik-Goose Bay Road, providing access from the south. Developing Clapp Road would be an alternative to Mack Road.

The Alaska Railroad mainline crosses the airport property northeast of the runway, providing an opportunity for sidings or spur lines if airport-related industrial use becomes viable in the future. The railroad also represents a barrier to effective float plane use on Jacobsen Lake, however, and a road-railroad crossing is needed to access the lake.

Land Use. DOT&PF has prepared an airport layout plan which provides the basis for initial land use within the airport boundaries. The new airfield is considerably larger than its predecessor, and includes a 3,700 foot runway,

appropriate safety and clearance zones, 112 tie-down spaces and nine lease lots totaling about 414,000 square feet in area. These lots vary in size from 30,375 square feet to 52,875 square feet. A rotating beacon is placed at the highest elevation, 405 feet. The Museum of Alaska Transportation and Industry occupies the northwest corner of the airfield next to the Alaska Railroad.

The airport has been designed to meet Wasilla's needs far into the future. In addition to the nine lease lots now completed, the airport layout plan provides for an additional 1.1 million square feet of aircraft parking and leasing space north of the runway, and an additional 500,000 square feet of leasing area south of the runway. Provision is also made for a parallel taxiway.

Existing land use around the airport perimeter is compatible with general aviation use. Land to the west is generally low density residential. The Alaska Railroad, Jacobsen Lake and the Parks Highway border the airfield to the north. Undeveloped land, including Lucille Creek, surrounds the airport to the east and south.

Land use around municipal airports is controversial for many cities which find themselves unable to contain incompatible urban growth. Wasilla has an important opportunity to provide economic development opportunities and simultaneously prevent unwanted land use in the vicinity.

In general, compatible land uses near airports include:

- ♦ Aviation-related businesses and infrastructure;
- ♦ Light industrial activity benefiting from transportation services available at the airport;
- ♦ Outdoor recreation areas such as golf courses;

operations are the most common "anchor" businesses at community airports.

While technically a non-aviation related business, sit-down coffee shops are popular attractions at many airports and are normally provided in aircraft terminals and waiting areas. If permitted under FAA guidelines, a coffee shop or restaurant should be encouraged at the new Wasilla airport.

Lease Rates. Lease rates should be carefully evaluated. The City is proposing lease rates substantially higher than those offered by competitors. In addition, other airports have unused lease lot capacity. Unless special amenities or incentives are provided, the Wasilla facility may not be competitive at rates higher than other established airfields.

Airport Facilities Needs Assessment.

Initially, electric power is the only utility provided to the lease lot area and for runway, taxiway and perimeter flood lighting. On-site water and sewer seems reasonable for the foreseeable future.

Aviation Fuel Service. Access to a reliable fuel supply is critical, especially for attracting and retaining transient traffic. The first choice is an on-field operator with manned pumps or truck service. Operators should be required to maintain a 24-hour a day fueling capacity by supplying a credit card pumping station.

Security. Providing effective airport security measures is extremely important to aircraft owners and pilots. If the Wasilla airport can market and deliver effective security for the parking apron areas, a competitive edge will be gained over many other local airfields.

Without a municipal police department, however, the City is limited to contracting for part-time security forces. DOT&PF has constructed four apron floodlights for 24-hour

illumination of the parking apron, but the area is neither fenced, nor gated.

24-Hour Per Day Personal Amenities.

The City must move quickly and decisively to provide customer services which will attract and retain business. Basic amenities which are essential, but often not available, include:

- ◆ Public telephones;
- ◆ Rest rooms;
- ◆ A shuttle or taxi service to and from town;
- ◆ A change machine;
- ◆ Visitor information;
- ◆ Snack and beverage machines

Locally-crafted wooden signage (e.g. "Welcome to Wasilla") would provide opportunities for local artisans, and create an authentic character for an otherwise sterile airfield. The basic amenities list could be provided on the City's lease lot, or made part of a leasing package to a fixed-base operator.

Wash Rack Facilities. At a minimum, the City or an operator should provide a water source and long hoses close to the tie-down and transient parking areas to enable pilots to wash their aircraft. Ideally, a taxi-through aircraft wash rack should be provided.

Internal Circulation and Amenities.

Internal circulation seems well designed for a typical uncontrolled airfield. Aircraft landing on Runway 21 would taxi directly to parking, while those landing on Runway 03 must taxi back on the runway to reach parking. A proposed parallel taxiway would resolve this problem.

The apron area consists of 84 assigned aircraft tie-down spaces, plus 28 spaces for transient parking. The City needs to lease as many of these tie-down spaces as possible to establish a

critical mass of activity which, in turn, would help attract businesses to the lease lots.

Fortunately, there are positive indicators of strong market demand for tie-down spaces. Permanent tie-downs at Palmer and Birchwood, for example, are almost fully booked, and waiting lists are common during break-up and summer. To maximize market share, however, Wasilla should consider both pricing policies and special tie-down amenities:

- ♦ Covered parking ports which can be rented on a temporary basis, or leased permanently, are a popular amenity at many general aviation airfields. This amenity is not offered at any competitive airfield in Southcentral Alaska, however, and could attract new business or draw off some existing business. Ports could be constructed for either trail-in or taxi-through flow. It is recommend that the City test this concept with a bay of 4-6 covered parking spots.
- ♦ Electrical plug-ins should be provided at central locations throughout the parking area within range of a long extension cord. Power should definitely be provided to any covered parking spots.
- ♦ Temporary use. A number of parking spots should be reserved (and marketed) for short-term rental (daily, weekly) to accommodate aircraft owners' light maintenance needs.
- ♦ Pricing. Currently, proposed rates are 50-65% higher than prevailing rates at competitive airports.
- ♦ Administration. DOT&PF's Leasing Division reports that collecting and administering tie-down rents is a major burden for many airfields. The Division recommends billing and collecting fees

on a quarterly or semi-annual basis to reduce administrative costs.

Transient Aircraft Parking Spaces. A minimum charge for overnight use should be considered. Palmer, for example, charges \$2.00 per night. DOT&PF is considering such fees, but does not presently charge for transient use.

Campground. Few airports provide overnight camping facilities for traveling aviators, despite a growing demand nationwide. A small camping area for transient aircraft could include tent sites, rent-a-can facilities, a water source and trash barrels. Ideally, this should be within view of the transient aircraft parking area.

Airport traffic forecasts. Forecasting airport traffic demand for small general aviation airfields is difficult. Furthermore, little market demand was conducted as part of the pre-construction process by the State.

In 1988 the University of Alaska-Anchorage, School of Business, prepared a preliminary market analysis for the proposed new airport for the City of Wasilla. As part of this effort, researchers conducted surveys of 32 Anchorage-area aviation-related businesses and 53 small aircraft owners. Twenty-one of the aircraft owners were from the Anchorage area, while the other 32 were from the Wasilla-Big Lake-Palmer area. Overall, neither group was seriously interested in relocating to a new Wasilla airport. Businesses surveyed cited the poor economy (1988 was near the depth of the recession) and the perceived lack of business at the new airfield. Factors which would encourage them to relocate, however, included:

- ♦ Demonstrated business potential;
- ♦ Economic expansion;
- ♦ Drop in insurance rates;

- ♦ Low to no taxes;
- ♦ City-built and leased facilities;
- ♦ Favorable restrictions to businesses (e.g. not awarding an excessive number of the same type of concession, so that none of the businesses are profitable);
- ♦ Pace needs were from 501-2,500 square feet;
- ♦ Ground lease rates of \$.02-.13 per square feet;
- ♦ Completed facility rates of \$.55-\$.75 per square feet;

Services desired by a majority of the aviation-related business and small aircraft owners included a fixed base operator (FBO), commuter service, maintenance, flight training school, covered hangar space, restaurant, air taxi operator, cargo service, ground school and aircraft rentals.

Only 19 percent of the aircraft owners and pilots surveyed said they were interested in moving to the new Wasilla airport. Those living in Anchorage saw no reason to drive over an hour to reach their aircraft. The survey noted that a number of pilots stated that the old Wasilla airport was the only airfield they could think of that provided fly-in shopping and dining without having to rent a car.

Significantly, 62 percent of those surveyed parked their aircraft on privately owned land such as a yard, nearby lake or personally owned runway. Many of these pilots buy fuel in bulk and would not normally fly to another airfield for gas. Several pilots were reluctant to move to a public airport because of vandalism and lack of security. The ideal airport, according to pilots surveyed, would be multi-use, including wheels, floats and skis and have adequate security. Two-thirds said they were not interested in covered hangar space, while about half said they would use the airport if it provided excellent maintenance or

avionics services. About two-thirds stated that neither lighting nor an instrument approach system would make a difference in their usage of the field.

Competitive Airports. The new airport must compete for business with a wide variety of airfields and facilities in the area. Major competition for the new airport can be found at airfields in Palmer, Birchwood, Goose Bay, Big Lake and Willow. Table 8 compares services, rates and facilities at these airfields.

Traffic Projections. The 1988 Environmental Assessment prepared by the State, cited some 1986 aviation traffic projections prepared by USKH, Inc. This information is shown as Table 9.

Flight Patterns. Flight alignments for expected aircraft should be compatible with surrounding land uses. DOT&PF envisions a standard right-hand traffic flow which avoids overflying the apron and parking areas, and keeps aircraft well away from developed areas.

Noise. The New Wasilla Airport Environmental Assessment prepared by DOT&PF in 1988 includes a detailed section on the potential for noise disturbance at the airport. A noise analysis found that noise levels below 65 Ldn (day-night average sound level in decibels) are found outside the airport boundary after considering anticipated traffic and aircraft through the year 2000. The FAA considers 65 Ldn or below as compatible with all non-aviation related land uses, including residential areas. The analysis concluded that no significant impacts would result from operation of the new airport.

Navigational Aids. A long-range goal for the City of Wasilla is for the airport to include a precision landing approach. The City has a non-directional beacon (NDB) which could be