

The land offers opportunities and constraints

The area selected for the New Capital City townsite contains many of the features that give the Alaska landscape its rugged beauty. The natural features that are the most appealing, however, also are the ones most sensitive to development and likely to be degraded without careful site design.

Deception Creek and its narrow valley quickly was revealed to be the single most important feature of the site. To the east and west, it widens into broad meadows, easily accessible from the south side of the valley. In the central portion, the creek winds through a 100-foot gorge faced with craggy granite outcroppings, suggesting an ideal park location. In the lowland areas south of the creek, small lakes are scattered throughout the site; with proper drainage design and selective enlargement, they can become focal points of the city.

The commission was determined to avoid building in sensitive or hazardous areas and, at the same time, create a new city revealing the site's unique natural qualities. Roadways having to cross Deception Creek to reach scenic areas would have to be carefully located and designed to avoid stream bank erosion or changes in flow liable to impact salmon spawning in the creek. Buildings would be confined to land with moderate slopes and suitable drainage. Free-standing dwellings with septic systems and domestic wells would not be located where the water table is high or drainage poor.

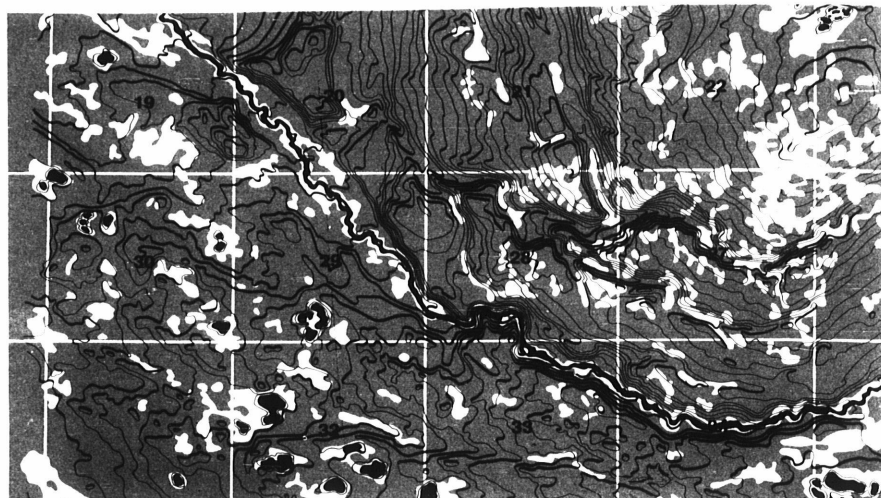
Assessment of the probable impacts and changes to the natural environment were part of the primary criteria in exploring alternative land development patterns. Before a tentative land use plan could begin, new maps had to be prepared for the many previously uncharted areas within the site. Analysis of the townsite's geologic and soils conditions, drainage patterns, slope gradients, fish and wildlife habitat and sun and wind exposure had to be completed. Areas were classified according to the degree of suitability for building, or, conversely, the desirability for natural conservation. Time alone limited the level of detail to which these studies were carried and these assessments should be refined during subsequent stages of planning. Thus, many study maps representing the townsite's inherent problems and suitability for a range of uses became the basis for the plans presented in this report.

Aerial reconnaissance was combined with field studies made by teams on foot, all-terrain vehicles, cross country skis and snow machines. One student group working with the State Division of Parks lived on the site for 30 days in the summer of 1977 in order to plot areas best suited for recreation.

Recognizing development of an entire city on totally undeveloped land will cause considerable impacts to the natural environment, the commission established acceptable limits for these changes. It is the intent of this environmental policy to build the City in harmony with the natural environment. The unique physical and biological processes can be retained while building a functional city with all of the conveniences expected by residents of an urban environment.

Among the many policies that have been adopted are the following:

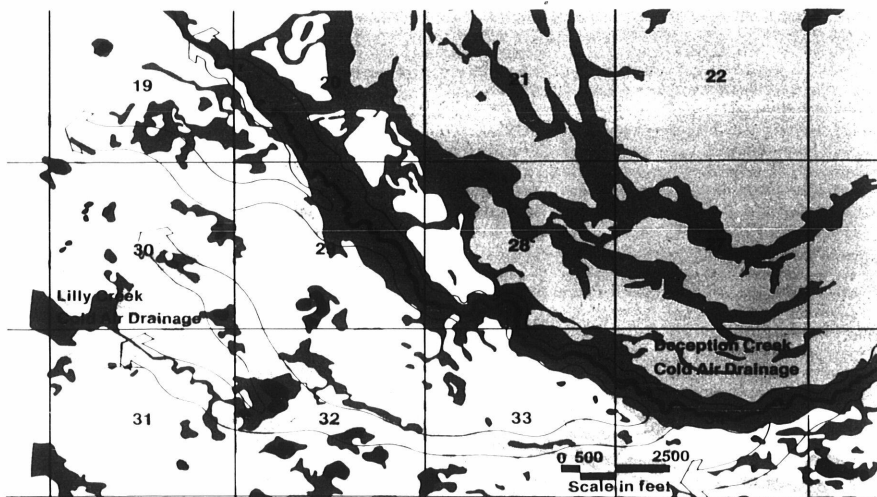
► **Air:** Vehicular traffic will be lessened by making small buses effective, clustering community activities and placing 70 per cent of the town's population within 1,000 feet of a bus route. A central heating system will reduce air pollutants and an air quality control program will be established.



Birch & Spruce Forest

Contour Interval 25'

In the process of city development, numerous opportunities exist to preserve creeks, lakes, forests and views to distant mountains.



Severe Building Limitations
(steep slopes, flood plain)

Moderate Building Limitations
(moderate slopes, bog)

Slight Building Limitations

Potentially hazardous steep slopes, bog areas, and sensitive habitats should be set aside as permanent open space.

► **Water:** Indigenous vegetation will be retained in broad, natural drainage areas to filter contaminants and existing ponds will be expanded and designed to handle siltation.

► **Vegetation:** Existing vegetation will be retained where possible and indigenous species will be re-planted in disturbed areas to save wildlife habitat, to abate noise from roadways and to separate incompatible uses.

► **Fish and Wildlife:** There will be no development in areas which could be

harmful to fish in Deception Creek and elsewhere. Major open spaces will be maintained to accommodate the habitats of animals native to the area.

► **Noise:** Separation of land uses by distance and land mass will minimize noise conflict. Recreation vehicles will be allowed only in specified areas.

► **Cultural Resources:** Historical sites of earlier cultures will be identified through field and preconstruction reconnaissance and important sites protected from development.