



Protecting the public's right to Park access.....

Municipality of Anchorage Planning Department
P.O. Box 196650
Anchorage, Alaska 99519

Re: Proposed changes to Title 21, Module 3

Dear Planning Staff:

I am writing on behalf of Chugach Park Access Coalition (CPAC) regarding proposed changes to the Municipality of Anchorage's Title 21 that our organization believes are vital to the future growth and development of Anchorage.

CPAC is incorporated as a non-profit corporation whose primary purpose is the preservation of continued opportunities for public access to Chugach State Park. It is inevitable that many of these existing opportunities will be lost as the hillside lands of Anchorage continue to be subdivided and developed, unless adequate provisions are contained in the planning and platting processes that recognize Park access planning as an integral step in the subdivision process.

CPAC represents the interests of thousands of Park users in the Anchorage area. We are concerned that the right to reasonable and convenient public access to Chugach State Park is being gradually eroded by piecemeal development and ineffective municipal ordinances. We have observed the gradual loss of public access at traditional access points on the Park's borders in Eagle River area and in south Anchorage, and the existing Title 21 ordinances do not adequately address this issue.

Because the existing platting requirements are vague or non-existent, the recognition of existing park access routes usually enters into the subdivision process only very late in the game, if at all. When this occurs, the preservation of existing Park access rights happens on a case-by-case basis, only during the public hearing process. This occurs, of course, at a point in the platting process when a proposed subdivision plat has already been drafted, and is being considered for approval. The requirement for legitimate and convenient public access to Chugach State Park should enter into the planning process much earlier than at this near-final opportunity -- if the access consideration arises at all, before a subdivision plat is approved.

Title 21 should absolutely require the designation of public access to Chugach State Park when land adjacent to the Park is being proposed for subdivision and development. It is simply not right, or in the greater public interest, to permit a subdivider to close off existing, convenient neighborhood public access to the Park, to in effect create a "private" Chugach Park for those few lot owners who may be lucky enough to own a lot abutting the Park.



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In addition, spreading the public access points into the Park across a larger area of the Park/subdivision interface will enhance each user's natural experience of the Park. It will also decentralize any access impacts across the entire perimeter abutting the Park, and will therefore avoid concentrating these impacts in a few high-volume public access points such as Glen Alps, Prospect Heights, and McHugh Creek. These high-volume access points understandably have an effect on neighboring subdivisions. The dispersal of future public access to a number of relatively small and low-impact access points that conform to existing routes and locations of public access into the Park should minimize any overall impacts resulting from preserving public access at a number of convenient and low-volume sites.

I am setting out below the specific sections of the proposed Title 21 provisions that CPAC believes should be adopted as indicated, so as to contain mandatory Park access considerations to be implemented during the platting process. In addition, I am attaching, as Attachments 1 through 4 to this letter, the original text of the sections proposed in the Title 21 Module 3, with the changes and additions proposed by CPAC being indicated by interlineations.

21.07.030 OPEN SPACE

A. Purpose

This Section 21.07.030 is intended to ensure that federal, state and municipal public parks, open space and natural areas throughout the Municipality are considered, protected and made accessible to the public through the development review process. Open space serves numerous purposes, including preservation of natural areas and resources, preservation of scenic views, greater resident access to open areas and recreation, public health benefits, and enhancement of the quality of new development in the Municipality.

21.07.060 TRANSPORTATION AND CONNECTIVITY

D. Streets And On-Site Vehicular Circulation

3. Street Connectivity

c. Connections to Vacant or Public Land

1. Where new development is adjacent to, or in close proximity to, land likely to be developed or redeveloped in the future, or to federal, state or municipal parks, natural areas,



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or open space lands, all streets, pathways, and access ways in the development's proposed street system shall continue through to the boundary lines of the area, as determined by the Director, Traffic Engineer, and the Municipal Engineer, to provide for the orderly subdivision of such adjacent land or the transportation and access needs of the community. In addition, all redevelopment and street improvement projects shall take advantage of opportunities for retrofitting existing streets to provide increased vehicular and pedestrian connectivity.

2. All streets and pathways in subdivisions adjacent to, or in close proximity to, federal, state or municipal parks, natural areas, or open space lands shall be dedicated as public easements. The establishment of a gated subdivision or community, if otherwise allowed, shall not have the effect of restricting or diminishing the public right and opportunity for access to adjacent or nearby public lands as provided in this Chapter.

3. Public parking within the right-of-way and adjacent to the traveled surface shall not be unreasonably restricted on streets that provide pedestrian or vehicular access to any public park, natural area, or open space land. If off-street public parking is not provided within a cul-de-sac, parking off the travel surface but within the right-of-way shall be provided adjacent to the cul-de-sac. The number of parking spaces shall be determined by the director and the Traffic Engineer, in consultation with the Superintendent of Chugach State Park.

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e. Cul-de-Sacs and Dead-End Streets Discouraged

The design of street systems shall use through-streets. Permanent cul-de-sacs and dead-end streets shall only be used when topography, the presence of natural features, and/or vehicular safety factors make a vehicular connection impractical, or where these design elements terminate in public easements that provides access to adjacent undeveloped properties or to public parks, natural areas, or open space lands. Site and/or subdivision plans shall incorporate provisions for future public access to adjacent, undeveloped properties, to existing adjacent development where existing connections are poor, and for future public access to public parks, natural areas, and open space lands.

21.08.040 DEDICATION

E. Trails



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1. The Platting Authority shall require the dedication of an easement for a trail designated on adopted municipal plans, or to provide connectivity with a trail or access point identified in the most current Chugach State Park access point inventory, master plan, or trail plan, when it finds that the trail cannot reasonably be located in an existing dedicated easement or right-of-way. The Platting Authority may modify the alignment, width, and scope of trail easements as necessary to integrate trail and subdivision designs, so long as the resulting trails are of comparable gradient, directness and utility, and reflect the general locations and patterns of existing public access routes.
2. To accomplish this result, the Municipality, in consultation with Chugach State Park staff, shall compile and maintain an inventory of known historic and existing access routes within the Municipality that are used by the public to gain access to Chugach State Park.
3. An acceptable public vehicular easement for Park access shall be a public street that is platted constructed and dedicated in accordance with relevant provisions of this Code. An acceptable public pedestrian easement for park access shall be a 20-foot-wide dedicated pedestrian access easement centered on an existing, recognized or relocated access trail into the Park, together with the provision of a dedicated, appropriately-sized parking area or on-street parking for Park users that is located at or adjacent to the commencement of the pedestrian easement.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit suggested revisions and additions to Title 21 regarding the platting process, and specifically as it relates to the preservation of public access to Chugach State Park.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cory Hinds".

Cory Hinds
President

Attachment 1 through 4

Attachment 1

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