

**FOR THE  
AMERICAN REVOLUTION  
BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION**



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**FAR NORTH BICENTENNIAL PARK**

**GREATER ANCHORAGE AREA BOROUGH**

**MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**A PROPOSAL  
FOR THE  
AMERICAN REVOLUTION  
BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION**

**September 1974**

**John R. Roderick, Mayor  
Greater Anchorage Bourough**

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Public Works Department

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## INTRODUCTION

The Far North Bicentennial Park concept was born of the enthusiasm of a few local citizens over the possibility of commemorating the 200th anniversary of the American Revolution in Anchorage, and for Alaska, by securing and holding for future generations as an open-space public park, a large and centrally-located piece of land. It was a most fortuitous circumstance that at the time that momentum was building to participate in the celebration of the birth of our nation, there should be newly available an opportunity to contribute to meaningful planning for a 5,000 acre tract of land, surrounded on three sides by rapidly urbanizing portions of the largest community of the nation's largest state.

In 1971, the Department of Defense declared that the Campbell Creek Range and Maneuver Site, known locally as Campbell Tract, was surplus to the military's needs. Five thousand ten acres were relinquished by Presidential Land Order to the Department of Interior on January 20, 1971, amended November 15, 1971; and accountability and responsibility was accepted November 4, 1971, amended November 23, 1971, by the Bureau of Land Management, Department of Interior. By this action the military released all remaining land which they held (except 45 acres) of the central Anchorage lands west of the dividing line between Ranges 2 and 3 North of the Seward Meridian.

In accepting responsibility and accountability for this large parcel, the Bureau of Land Management set in motion a frenzy of activity among public and private groups, federal, state, borough and city agencies and departments and private groups, each wanting a part or all of the land.

The use proposals have ranged over a wide variety of possibilities. Some saw the area as a fairly easy source of that commodity nearly as

valuable as gold — namely, gravel. Others saw the area maintained, just as it is, as a habitat for moose and other wild animals. Still others saw the area parceled out to private developers for the expansion of the kind of development that now borders it on three sides. The diversity and sheer number of proposals claiming to be "in the public interest" have made quite clear one simple fact: even a site of 5,000 acres cannot accommodate all of the uses which have been proposed.

Articulating what is in the public interest has always been a most difficult task and concentrating attention to the public interest has more often than not been bypassed in the planning process, particularly in the implementing of plans. Decisions based on the public interest should reflect considerable thought about the community's long range goals and objectives; such decisions must conform to the collective image of what the community ought to be like in the "future", and that future should be both 1976 and 2076. We know very little of what our world will be like in 2076; however, we harbor the deepest feelings that some of the past that we remember and cherish, and observe being eroded away, should somehow be preserved for the benefit of our children and their children.

The approach of the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the American Revolution has been the catalyst for the development of this proposal to preserve some of the good things of the present. The American Bicentennial can be meaningful even if it serves only as a reminder of our cultural heritages. But it can be much more. It can inspire the resolve to take deliberate actions which are based on the same premises which motivated and guided the actions of Americans 200 years ago. It can, perhaps for only a short time, set aside some of the apathy and pessimism with government and provide an opportunity for a community to accomplish at least one act which truly manifests those hardy principles. So consider this as you weigh the arguments for what is "in the public interest". If the sense of community is still strong

in us; if we care as much about that which belongs to all of us as we do about our personal possessions; then this proposal can become a reality.

## OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the proposal to create the Far North Bicentennial Park are set forth here.

1. To maintain the Far North Bicentennial Park in perpetuity as a public park for the benefit of the citizens of Alaska.
2. To preserve the streambeds, watershed areas, and wildlife habitat of the area in as pristine a condition as possible allowing for compatible use of the area for nature appreciation by the public.
3. To provide for recreational use by the citizens in areas where such use will be consistent with the primary objectives of nature conservation.
4. To provide areas where more intensive public uses can be developed in a manner consistent with nature and harmonious with neighboring uses.
5. To provide regulations and controls which will accomplish the aforementioned objectives and insure the continuous maintenance of these lands in a nearly natural state for the benefit of future generations.

This document proposes that the Campbell Tract be public lands and that the uses in it contribute to a renewed sense of community. There are many views as to what specific uses can best make this contribution. Differences of opinion do not reflect any irreconcilable polarization of values. Rather, such differences are really only very small shifts in the delicately balanced interrelationships of our collective perception of what is important and what is good.

This is a proposal by the whole community, but it is being drafted by the Greater Anchorage Area Borough's Parks and Recreation staff. The plan describes the process of looking at the land with the community's goals in mind and putting down what should be accomplished based on the characteristics of the land and what the community wants. It involves setting down on paper a series of rules of development, or covenants, that will assure that the goals for the preservation of this particular land will endure.