

# Chapter 6

## South Side (Nordic) Development

The focus of the South Side Development is to provide a Nordic ski area and other multiple-purpose non-motorized trails and activities. The area facilities would include appropriate roads and parking, a stadium area and chalet, and trail systems. This area will serve as a center for various summer and winter activities.

Early emphasis will be on developing road access to the Nordic skiing area from Edgerton Park Road including expansion of electricity and telephone grids to support the various multiple-use recreational opportunities. The majority of these recreational facilities should be located and configured similar to that proposed as part of the JL Properties proposal as located and designed by HDR (Bill Spencer) in 2004.

Unlike the JL Properties proposal, there will be no residential or commercial development, at least during the initial development phases. As part of the environmental analysis work being conducted by DOWL Engineers extensive geotechnical and hydrological testing along with and other scientific and technical studies and investigations to determine the areas physical suitability for any future development including physical suitability for possible future residential and commercial uses will take place.

### Transportation

#### *Roads*

Road access into the area currently does not exist. While a final determination has not been made, it is expected that at least three alternatives will be examined as part of the DOWL Engineers environmental analysis and scoping process, all originating from Edgerton Park Road. The length of the road is expected to be approximately 1 mile long terminating at the center of the proposed Nordic facilities.

The environmental analysis process will determine the best route into center of the area. Previous plans for road access into the South side have proposed that the primary access would come from Hatcher Pass Road. Such access would have included a bridge over the Little Susitna River and several more miles of road. Preliminary estimates for constructing a bridge were approximately \$2.8 million. Paved road access has been estimated at \$2.5 million per mile. The access road has been broken into two phases with a gravel road being constructed in Phase I and paving to occur in Phase II in conjunction with construction of a day use lodge.



Because there will be no residential or commercial development, at least during this stage of the project, the option for access across the Little Susitna River, coupled with a longer road system is no longer a consideration.

### *Parking*

Two parking areas will be needed on the South Side. The first will be 3 acres in size to be constructed in Phase I. This parking area will be located at the terminus of the road and serve as parking area for the South Side Chalet and as a trailhead for the Nordic trails. This parking area would be expanded in Phase IV to 5 acres when the amphitheater area is built and possibly a conference center.

The second parking area will be located off the access road into the South Side just inside the Borough's property boundary. This parking lots will be approximately 2 acres in size and used for "park and ride" service to the Alpine skiing area. It can also be used for overflow parking to the Nordic ski area when necessary and used as a trailhead and/or camping area for people using other recreational trails in the area.

## **Facilities**

### *Stadium Area*

A multiple-purpose stadium area will be sited at the center of the trail systems that will provide a base and focus for the various trails and other amenities. The stadium area will be located in a natural amphitheater location that is located and configured to make maximum advantage of the natural terrain and sun expose. The hillside location identified by DNR in 2004 meets these needs.

The stadium location needs to be sized (minimum of approximately 200 yards by 75 yards (3 acres) with room for expansion to provide room for a start-finish for competitive events, and to accommodate other activities (picnicking, sledding, pony hill, etc).

The stadium complex, especially he sledding hill area could be used for outdoor summer events such as concerts and festivals as well.

### *Chalet*

A 4,500 square foot day use chalet style facility would be built in Phase II, similar in size and configuration to the Hilltop Ski Area in Anchorage. Unlike Alpine facilities, there are no industry standards for a Nordic day use facility. The recommended square footage for this structure is based on expected use for competitive events and should contain a warming/information area, restroom facilities, ski waxing area, some concessions. The building should also have a large community meeting area. The facility should be designed and constructed to allow for future expansion to accommodate a conference center, with full food and beverage service later (Phase IV).

## Trails

The South Side would have a noteworthy trail system highlighted by well-laid out Nordic competitive trails and extensive Nordic recreational trails. The trail system would also include hiking, mountain biking and other multiple-use trail systems to be built over three phases. The Nordic trail systems would be built in Phases I and II and trail lighting would be added during Phase III.

### *Competition Trails*

The area chosen for competition trails takes advantage of the benched areas to the north and east of the stadium area. This area offers the finest views, the most challenging terrain, and because of the higher altitude, the most consistent snow conditions. In addition, this area has low value for any future development for residential or commercial use due to shallow bedrock and the anticipated poor availability of water.

In 2004 HDR came up with a preliminary design to meet the requirements for competition ski trails. Their design also considered use of these trails in both summer and winter seasons by a variety of competitors and recreationalist from snowshoers, runners, walkers, recreational skiers, and mountain bikers.

During Phase I, 10 kilometers of this trail system would be developed with an additional 5 kilometers to be added in Phase II. Design criteria include:

- 15-17 Kilometers of International caliber competition ski trail. Competition loops are targeted at specific competition distances both for skiing and biathlon. Loops of 1.5, 2, 2.5, 3, 3.5, 4, and 5 kilometers for biathlon and 1.5, 2.5, 5, 7.5, 10, 12.5, 15, and 16.67 kilometers for skiing.
- Designed to meet International Ski Federation (ISF) Homologation Specification for international competition.
- Final design should be biased toward the less difficult end of the spectrum to allow the trails to be used by the recreational public and should utilize bypasses and cutoffs to provide less demanding recreational loops within the competition trail system.
- Trails should be 20 feet in width and be constructed of native material wherever possible.
- In the event that the competition trail must cross roads grades, separated crossings shall be provided. All such structures sized to accommodate appropriate track setting (track and ski) equipment.
- Trails should be designed and built to minimize grooming dead ends in order to maximize grooming efficiency.



## *Biathlon Facility*

A competition Biathlon range would be added during Phase IV, which would include a penalty loop. The remainder of the biathlon trail system has been designed into the competition trail system. While proposed in Phase IV, the biathlon shooting range could be added any time after the Phase I trails are constructed and when funds or the necessary shooting range equipment becomes available.

## *Recreational Trails*

Supplementing the competition trails is a system of recreational trails specifically targeted for the recreational users. These trails will be narrower in width to reduce the visual impact and provide a more intimate trail experience.

This system will connect to the competition trail system and stadium area and extend along the hillside to the west. Except for the upper reaches of this area, the terrain is less severe than the area occupied by the competition trails but still offers spectacular views and challenging terrain for beginning and intermediate users. This area offers more open terrain and the system will take advantage of available terrain to screen the loops from each other.

Like the competitive trails system, 10 kilometers of this trail system would be developed during Phase I with an additional 5 kilometers to be added in Phase II.

- 15 Kilometers of beginner to intermediate difficulty recreational trails.
- Trails should be 12 feet wide to allow winter grooming with mechanized equipment.
- Grade separated crossing provided at any road crossings.
- Trail system designed as a ladder loop system with easier loops near the stadium and more difficult loops farther removed. Trails designed to maximize the enjoyment of views and terrain of the hillside without being overly dense.
- System will target “destinations points” such as overlooks or stream crossings to enhance the enjoyment of users, young and old.
- Trail loops designed to minimize grooming dead ends that will maximize grooming efficiency.

## *Hiking Trails and Multiple-Use Trails*

In designing the trail system for the area, HDR (Bill Spencer) located several casual or recreational hiking trails and multiple-use trails to provide access leading to various locations in the area including the stadium area with trails to the ridges and hillsides above the development. These trails will interconnect with the Nordic trail system in some locations.

- These narrow hiking trails will maximize the views and terrain while providing access above tree line for walking, berry picking, climbing, backcountry skiing and snowboarding, paragliding etc.

- Trails will range from easy to moderate.
- Trails will be located to avoid sensitive areas (riparian areas, wetlands) and hazardous areas and provide hiking opportunities for all age and skill levels including handicapped.
- Some of the trails will be designed around a 6 foot wide pervious hardened surface to allow for all weather use. Brush and vertical obstructions should be removed to 12 feet to allow winter grooming.
- Trails will meander through greenbelt, wetland, and steam areas with at grade crossings.
- Some users may be confined to this system during certain times of the year and as such, the trails must be designed to meet those needs. Multiple users confined to this trail system would include all those users who may have a detrimental impact on the recreational and competition trails. This may include in winter; Equestrian, Skijoring, foot traffic and snow bikes. Summer use of the recreational and competition trails will be less restrictive but will be limited during spring when the ground is too soft to support the weight of most users.

### *Trail Lighting*

During Phase III, 15 kilometers of the Nordic trails would have night lighting added. The lighting should be broken into separate 5-kilometer segments so that only those segments of the trails that are being used at any one time are lit.

The competition trails will have two, 5-kilometer segments for a total of 10 kilometers of lighting. The recreational trails will have 5 kilometers of lighting. Lighting of these trails will be low density and aimed downward to minimize night light pollution to the surrounding area.

## **Future Development**

Not currently included in the proposed development, but facilities that should be kept in mind when developing a master plan for the area includes:

- Camping and picnic areas. Near the stadium facility and contained within one of the recreational trail loops should be an area reserved for picnicking and possibly overnight camping or RV use. This area would provide a base from which out-of-state or non-local users could access and enjoy the stadium and recreational opportunities provided in the entire Hatcher Pass area.
- Pony lift. This lift could be located directly above the stadium area with a vertical drop of approximately 180 feet of beginning terrain that is within site of the other recreational facilities. This facility would broaden the spectrum of activities available to attract families to this South Side area. Because of the distance to the larger alpine development at Government Peak there may be a demand for a small facility closer to the cross country skiing trails for a healthy outlet of youthful energies and family recreational activities to learn to ski, snowboard, take lessons, etc.
- Additional lighting added to the Nordic and multiple-use trails systems.

- Parking and stadium should have lighting to facilitate events and for safety reasons.
- Additional trails can be added to the network aimed more a specific users such as single tracks for mountain bikers, equestrian, etc.

