

STEHEKIN VALLEY  
LAKE CHELAN NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

LAND ACQUISITION DISCUSSION

May 1, 1978

## INTRODUCTION

Since the establishment of Lake Chelan National Recreation Area in 1968 the Park Service has been purchasing land from willing sellers. The results have been a reduction of privately owned land from 1,700 acres in 1968 to 656 acres (165 tracts) today. Of these, 348 acres (92 tracts) are currently vacant. Guiding this acquisition of properties has been a zoning plan which was prepared in 1969 as part of a master plan for the entire park complex. With the exception of 45 tracts totaling 72.87 acres at the head of the lake, which was designated as a PRIVATE USE AND DEVELOPMENT ZONE, all of the private land in the valley was placed in a PUBLIC USE AND DEVELOPMENT ZONE. The idea behind the two zones was that all private land in the PUBLIC USE ZONE was needed for public use, while private land in the PRIVATE USE ZONE was not. Individuals owning property in the PUBLIC USE ZONE, could, however, build or subdivide their property as long as the action taken was compatible with recreation area. However, the definition of compatibility was never clearly defined, thereby, making it difficult to evaluate proposed development projects.

In 1977 the National Park Service adopted a new nationwide land acquisition policy which states that "any development of unimproved lands or substantial alterations of existing improvements including major additions to existing structures constitutes an incompatible act." It should be noted however that the National Park Service will not acquire lands within authorized park boundaries . . . "where, consistent with provisions of the law, zoning satisfactory to the Secretary of the Interior is in force, or in those where land uses satisfactory to the Secretary of the Interior and compatible with park purposes are being implemented."

In order to determine the applicability of this new policy in Lake Chelan National Recreation Area, the planning team has been directed, as part of its on-going planning effort, to conduct a meeting with Stehekin property owners to explain and answer questions about the new policy, as follows:

1. Illustrate and discuss what might happen in the valley based on the application of existing county zoning regulations and no further land acquisition.
2. Outline the consequences of applying the new policy based on the existing National Park Service land acquisition zoning plan.
3. Discuss possible zoning revisions that might be considered such as adding additional areas to the private use and development zone.

### A. POSSIBLE FUTURE OF DEVELOPMENT BASED ON EXISTING COUNTY ZONING AND FURTHER LAND ACQUISITION

The following is a discussion of the patterns of growth and development that has occurred in the past and a theoretical projection of future development. Enclosed are maps which relate to the discussion.



## 1. Historic Growth Patterns

Analysis of development in the valley has identified four periods (1) prior to 1945; (2) up to 1955; (3) 1955 to 1968; and (4) 1968 to present -- which serve to illustrate how Stehekin has evolved during the last 40 years.

Stehekin has always been, and remains today, rather isolated from the main population groupings of the Pacific Northwest. This isolation has served as a magnet for two basic groups of people -- the rugged individualist and the vacationer.

The first group formed the major population base prior to 1955. Generally, it can be said that every aspect of their lives was influenced by the natural aspects of the valley; and as can be seen on the enclosed maps, the pattern of their settlements reflected their attitudes and awareness of things around them. To a large degree, the initial areas of settlement formed the basis for all future development in that these pioneers owned large tracts of land which were the best parcels in the valley. Following this period, generally about 1955, an increase of seasonal residents began to appear. While this marked a change in the social character of the community, the pattern and location of settlements remained close to that established by the group who preceded them. By this time (1955), three distinct areas of development were taking shape - the landing, the river valley below Buckner's Homestead and the Company Creek/McGregor Meadows area.

The period commencing with 1968 marked the beginning of an era in which it appears that forces external to the valley served to determine the pattern of development. Through parkland acquisition, traditional growth patterns were disrupted. Many large tracts were purchased and new homesites were forced into the remaining area through infilling and subdivision.

Had the National Recreation Area not been established, the development pattern might have proceeded as three relatively dense development clusters with fingers of low density settlement emanating from them, predominately along the two major roadways.

With the aforementioned disruption of traditional patterns, growth since 1968 has increasingly taken place in areas which contribute to an impression of naturalness in the valley. Specifically, increasing development has occurred along the road corridor, lakeshore and the river corridor.

## 2. Possible Future Growth Patterns

At the present time the privately owned land in Stehekin Valley is zoned by Chelan County as a general use district which means that the highest and best use of the valley has not yet been determined. Allowable uses within this district include residential and agricultural with a minimum lot size of one (1) acre. The minimum lot size could be 10,000 square feet if a public water system and sewer system were provided.



Assuming that all remaining private land was developed for residential use on one acre lots, the number of homes would increase from approximately 120 to approximately 340. The resulting population would be between 800 and 950 people, one-third the size of Chelan.

It is extremely difficult to predict what the character of the valley would be like under these conditions; however, several changes would take place. For example, the power system would almost triple in size; the amount of relatively natural land would decrease; traffic on the valley road would increase; the need for additional community services would arise. These services could include fire protection, police protection, garbage removal, grocery store, automobile services, and new roads, and bridges to reach some of the undeveloped land. The existing road might require upgrading. The demand for river gravel to create fill for building sites would increase. The demand for fire wood would increase. Additional costs to generate and distribute power would result in increasingly higher rates. Presumably, air quality would decrease (because of more automobiles, more home fires, etc). Continued increase in use of septic systems could lead to a decrease in water quality of the river; removal of gravel could lead to loss of aquatic life. Natural scenic qualities would diminish by the presence of more structures at the head of the lake and along the road corridor.

It is, of course, not possible to say with certainty that this development pattern will actually occur. It can only be said that it is possible, assuming that existing county regulations can be satisfied, and that future landowners will not make the same sensitive land use decisions that have generally been made in the past.

With this in mind, the following alternatives have been identified as possible ways of guiding future land use in order to protect the magnificent scenery, relatively undisturbed landscape and other values which make the area unique, and to support and reinforce the values of the present Stehekin Community.

ALTERNATIVE A: IMPLEMENT NEW NATIONAL PARK SERVICE LAND ACQUISITION POLICY:  
NO CHANGE IN PRIVATE USE AND DEVELOPMENT ZONE BOUNDARY

The 1977 revised land acquisition policy would prevent any development from occurring outside the private use and development zone. The policy also prevents any change in land use from taking place. Therefore, if you do not own land within the private use and development zone, you cannot change your land use. For example, if your property has one home today, that is all it can ever have. However, if a structure is destroyed, it may be rebuilt.

Presently, of the 45 properties in the private use and development zone, 18 are developed.

This alternative would be the most restrictive in that it would freeze development at its current level except in the private use and development zone.

ALTERNATIVE B: PLACE ALL PRIVATE LAND IN A PRIVATE USE AND DEVELOPMENT ZONE AND APPLY NEW ZONING REGULATIONS

As an attempt to add more flexibility to the restrictive nature of the new National Park Service land acquisition policy, all private land would be placed in a private use and development zone. This would mean that individuals would be able to develop their properties, consistent with appropriate zoning, without the possibility of National Park Service acquisition. New county zoning regulations would be formulated to allow for different densities depending on location. Types of land use which would be compatible in the area would also be identified.

ALTERNATIVE C: REDEFINE THE BOUNDARIES OF THE PRIVATE USE AND DEVELOPMENT ZONE BASED ON RESOURCE VALUES

Under this alternative, the Private Use and Development Zone would be redefined on the basis of a visitor experience which is derived from the resource values found in the valley.

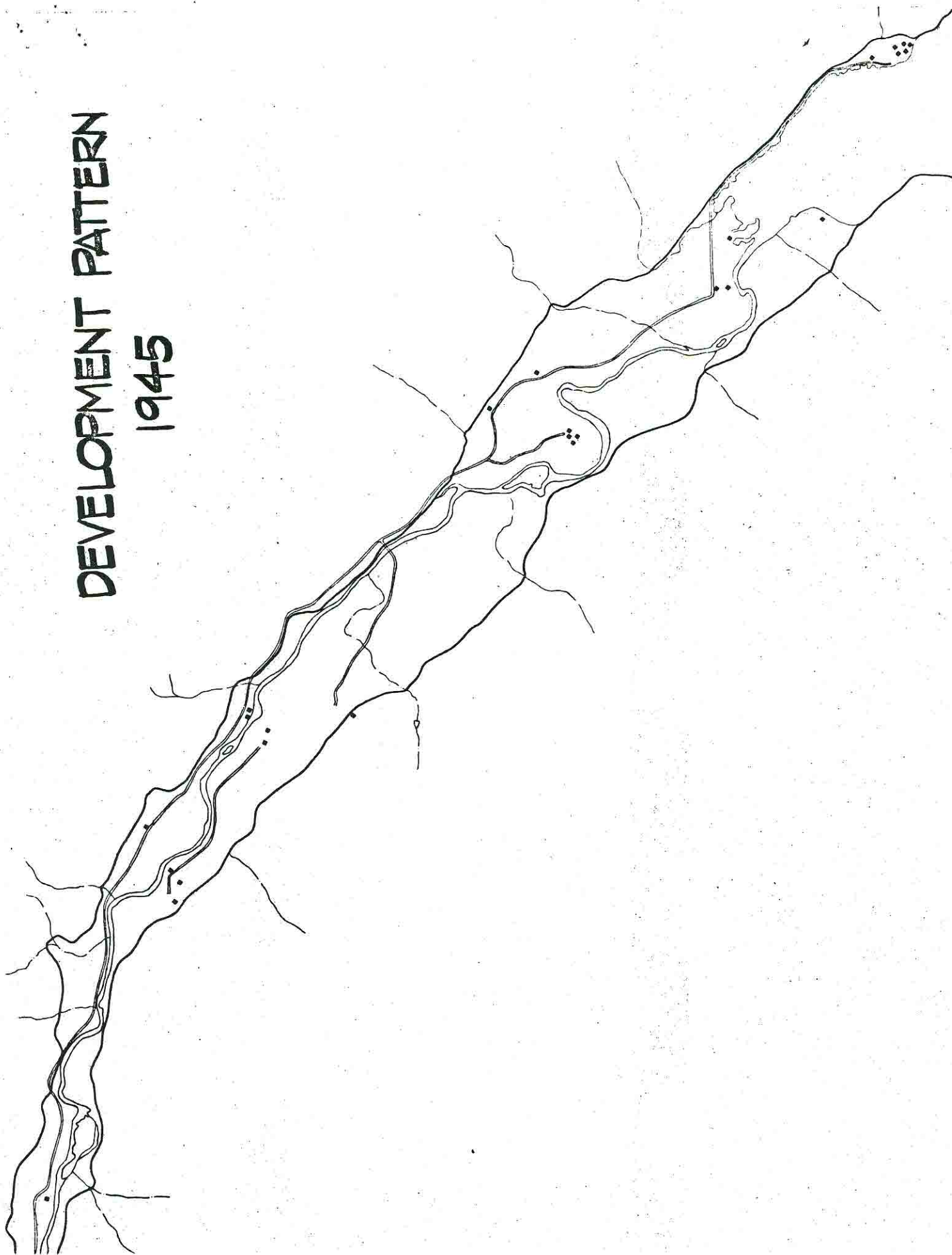
These resource values were alluded to in the legislation which established the National Recreation Area in 1968. Essentially, those lands which contribute to the visitor experience through their scenic, historic, or natural values would be identified and private lands in these areas would be placed in a Public Use and Development Zone. Private land located on lands which do not significantly benefit or add to the visitor experience would be included in a Private Use and Development Zone.

Thus, this alternative seeks to achieve a balance between land use and the preservation of scenic, historic and natural values. This would apply to visitor use as well as private development.



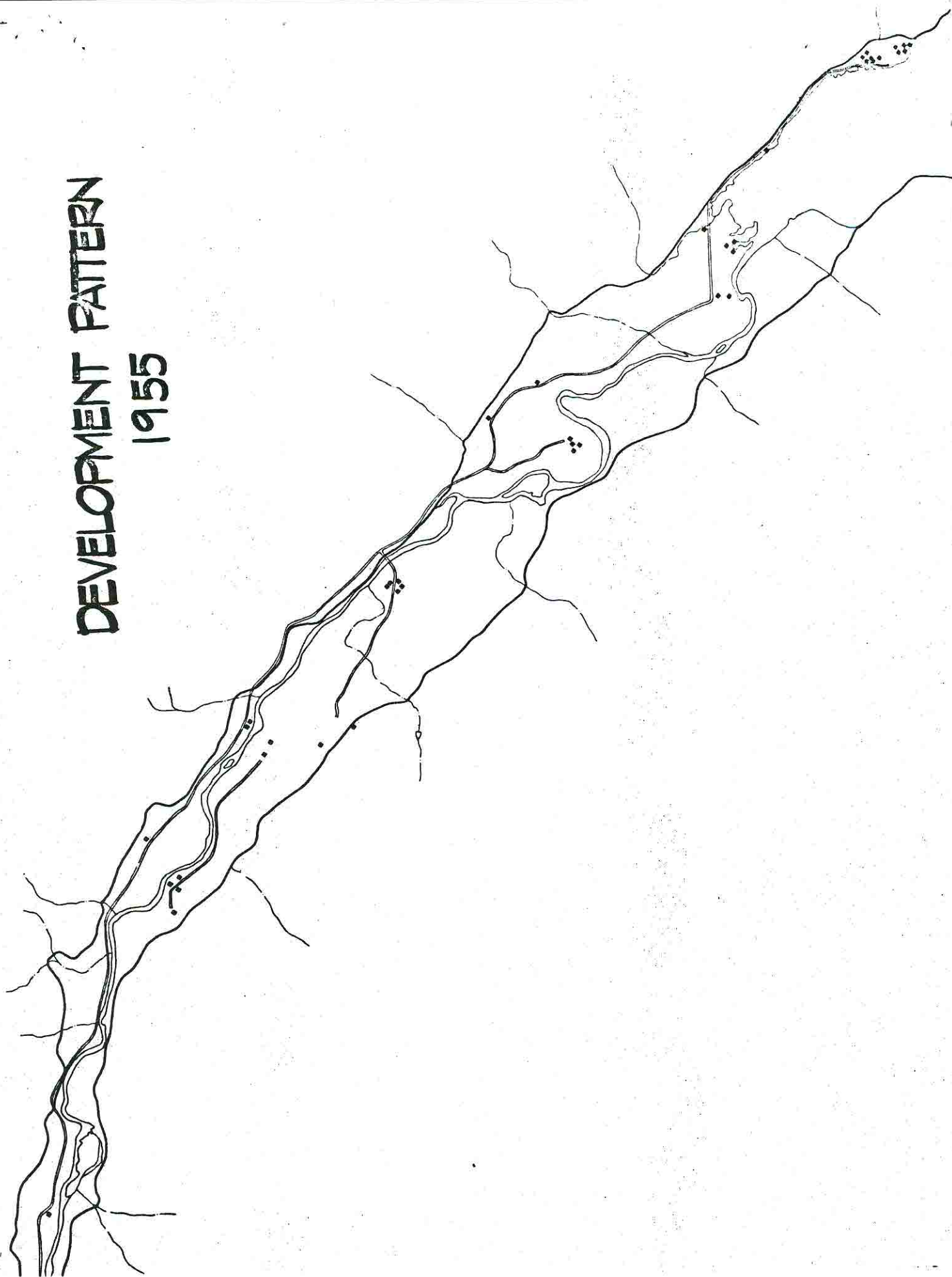
# DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

1945



# DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

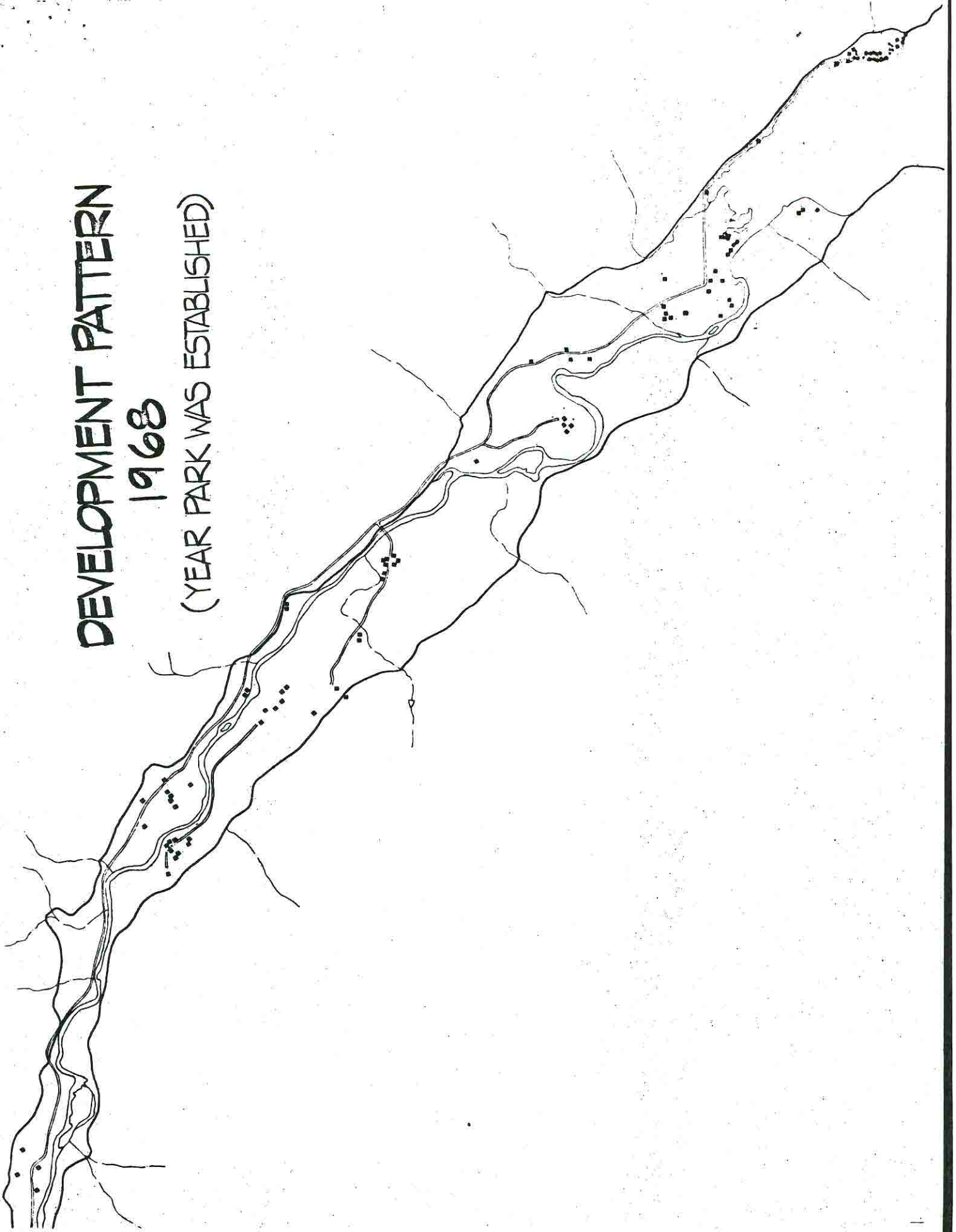
1955



# DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

1968

(YEAR PARK WAS ESTABLISHED)





# DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

1978

■ - BUILDINGS CONSTRUCTED SINCE 1968



# POSSIBLE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

(BASED ON 1 ACRE LOT SIZE AND NO DEVELOPMENT  
IN THE FLOODWAY OR ON SLOPES STEEPER  
THEN 20 PERCENT.)

