

# **Affordable Housing in Russian Jack Community**

## **Mobile Home Parks Social Policy Project**

**Respectfully submitted to the Russian Jack Community Council  
Kathleen Plunkett, Council Chair**

**University of Alaska Anchorage  
School of Social Work  
Introduction to Social Work Class  
Spring Semester, 2001  
May 9, 2001**

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**Introduction**

The Russian Jack Community Council, for many years, has been keenly interested in the development of land in their area and the impact it will have on the quality of life of its community residents. Housing is an important issue, particularly the availability of affordable housing. Housing density is quite high in the Community, with a large quantity of multiple family housing. The Council is particularly concerned with the potential reduction of residential space as the result of land development. This is a concern not only in Russian Jack but also throughout the Municipality. Recently in Anchorage, there has been the rezoning of mobile home parks for some development that is non-residential. It is believed by some, that mobile home communities in Anchorage are on their way out; particularly those located in prime real estate locations.

According to the Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan (Anchorage 2020), in a sidebar regarding mobile home parks, there is expressed a need, by some community members, to retain mobile home parks as a housing choice. Another name for these parks are manufactured home communities. Mobile home living offers an affordable housing choice and a desired neighborhood lifestyle and currently represents 6% of the total housing stock in Anchorage. With diminishing land supply, some mobile home parks, if not all, are slated to be redeveloped into other uses. Concern has been expressed regarding the loss of this housing option, and the impact redevelopment has upon mobile home residents. Nationally, there is a trend in the other direction. In 2000, one out of six new single-family housing starts were manufactured homes.

There are two large mobile home parks in Russian Jack and a number of others close by. Maintaining mobile homes as a viable housing option as well as concern over what may replace mobile home parks if redeveloped, have resulted in increased interest to learn more about these issues. A social work class at the University of Alaska Anchorage, supported by the Russian Jack Community Outreach Partnership Center, elected to study the issue of mobile home parks and develop a number of policy recommendations for the Council.

Seventeen students and their instructor surveyed existing literature, news media stories, Internet sites, and a task force report. The task force report, Anchorage Response to Manufactured Housing Community Relocations, was completed October 24, 2000. In spring 2000, Archbishop Francis Hurley, Catholic Archdiocese of Anchorage, and Dennis McMillian, Executive Director, United Way of Anchorage, convened this task force of forty citizens, representing

a variety of people concerned with housing, to review issues surrounding the relocation of residents of Alaskan Village Mobile Home Court in the Muldoon area. Apprehension existed that some of the mobile home residents may become highly at risk of becoming homeless. It was also felt that the involuntary move alone would create much anxiety among those affected. Some of the findings and recommendations from this task force are incorporated into this report.

Other activities of the class, included interviewing residents of mobile home parks; attending Assembly meetings and work sessions for the rezoning of mobile home parks: Plaza 36 and Alaskan Village; interviewing key informants, some of whom were members of the task force; attending the meeting of the Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness and the monthly meetings of Russian Jack Community Council. Some students also followed the progress of Senate Bill 6 MOBILE HOME PARK EVICTION NOTICE introduced by Senators Johnny Ellis and Bettye Davis of Anchorage and House Bill 11 MOBILE HOME PARK EVICTION NOTICE introduced by Representatives Eric Croft and Lisa Murkowski.

## **Findings**

These findings are derived from a number of resources and grew out of the activities of the class, found in the Appendix 2 of this report.

- Many trailer parks are located on property that has been identified as prime business real estate.
- Present State law provides residents with a 180-day notice to vacate the property regardless of the season of the year. The developer is under no obligation to the tenants dislocated from the property other than issuing an eviction notice.
- The involuntary dislocation of mobile home residents may be a very traumatic experience and result in homelessness depending upon a number of factors. Some of these are low economic resources, condition of mobile home preventing the home from being moved, expense of bringing mobile home up to code after the move being prohibitive, and the lack of affordable housing, other than in a mobile home, being available.
- The Municipal Assembly has rezoned two mobile home parks: Plaza 36 and Alaskan Village and residents have been given eviction notices.
- It is estimated that among mobile home dwellers are a higher percentage of elders as well as persons experiencing a disability, both of whom have limited, rather fixed income. Mobile home communities are often located closer to services and resources.

- MOA Health and Human Services has been noticeably absent in the response to residents of Plaza 36 and Alaskan Village. Catholic Social Services was engaged by the developers in working with the residents of both parks in planning relocation.
- Owners of Plaza 36 and Alaskan Village created a relocation fund and engaged Catholic Social Services to assist in developing plans for tenants. Catholic Social Services was to determine the amount of money to be provided to each tenant. \$5,000 was set as the norm but it may fluctuate up or down depending upon Catholic Social Services assessment. Tenants would receive \$2,500 if home was not moveable and developer would dispose of the mobile home. Some tenants experience was that the total cost for moving a trailer would be more in the vicinity of \$8,000. Some mobile home residents felt that this agency was more an agent for the developers than non-partisan in the negotiations.
- Alaskan Village owner was going to pay each mobile home owner \$2,500 to help with the costs of locating but raised it to be similar to the offer of Plaza 36 owner. Both were voluntarily offered, as there is no legal requirement to assist with moving costs.
- Some mobile home parks are offering reimbursement in moving costs to new occupants. The money may be used toward moving costs, tie-downs, electric and plumbing contractors, and skirting. Permits for a single trailer without add-ons would cost between \$1,500 - \$2,000. Skirting may cost between \$1,000-\$3,000.
- People who have moved, report MOA inspection of homes prior to move and following move is inconsistently applied. After the move more code violations are found.
- When major relocation occurs, some trailer moving companies raise prices dramatically.
- Some trailer park owners are very selective in choosing whom to allow to move into their park.
- Moving the trailer involved much more time than was anticipated by the owners. The actual move can take up to two days and moving in may take up to 60 days because of hook-up time and "skirting" the trailer. Tenants had to find temporary living arrangements during the move. Costs of moving a trailer included the actual move, hook-up fees, deposit for space rent, utility deposits, land deposits, skirting fees, and inspection fees.

- Some residents who are forced to move, may elect to move to the Mat-Su Valley, if their mobile homes can withstand the move, because code enforcement is non-existent.
- Some people have had victimization experiences when moving into mobile home parks. Among these are paying high interest rates (17%) on purchase of a home, because of mortgage companies refusing to finance; being quoted lower space rent prior to moving only to be told it is higher once the move occurred; incurring additional expense in having to bring the newly purchase trailer up to code, and experiencing higher costs than anticipated for hook-up. Some managers will take possession of the trailer if the owner cannot pay for all the costs and may often know ahead of time that tenants will not be able to meet the conditions of the contract.
- Presently, there is no ordinance allowing manufactured housing to be placed upon standard lots in Anchorage.
- Senate Bill 6 MOBILE HOME PARK EVICTION NOTICE introduced by Senators Johnny Ellis and Bettye Davis of Anchorage passed the Senate March 29, 2001 and is currently in the House Judiciary Committee. The Senate version provides for a 365-day notice of eviction to the tenant with the move occurring only during the period of May 1 to October 15. Only 180 days' notice is required if a suitable place to relocate the mobile home is found and the mobile home park owner or operator pays the disconnection, relocation, and reestablishment costs of the mobile home or \$5,000, whichever is less, and a longer notice period is not provided in a valid lease. If the change in land use requires relocating 10 or more mobile homes, the mobile home park owner or operator may contribute to a pooled relocation fund \$5,000 for each mobile home being relocated, and the relocation fund shall pay the actual disconnection, relocation, and reestablishment costs of each mobile home; however, the relocation fund may not be required to pay more than the total received from the owner or operator.
- In April 2001, MOA Community Development Division is planning the reallocation of \$150,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds for Mobile Home Dislocation Assistance by rehabilitating homes for building code regulations and rehabilitation for improvements needed to successfully move.
- A Tenant's organization was formed called the Alaska Tenant Advisory Council. Its goal is "to promote, preserve, and protect the manufactured home lifestyle". They are actively soliciting members who own mobile homes. (338-2125) Ms. MacKenna Johns, a resident of Alaska Village, (338-8296) is a major spokesperson for the Alaska Tenant Advisory Council and has met on numerous occasions with Assembly members,

community councils, and developers on behalf of mobile home residents. She has compiled a vast amount of resources concerning mobile homes and is willing to work with anyone on the issue of affordable housing.

- Nationally: Source U.S. Department of Commerce
- Over 19 million people (8% of US population) live full-time in manufactured housing
- 88% of these owners report satisfaction with the manufactured housing lifestyle
- In 2000, one out of six new single-family housing starts were manufactured homes.
- 68% of manufactured homes are located on private property and 32% were located in communities.
- Single section new homes average \$31,800 and multi-section homes average \$50,200.

### **Policy Recommendations**

- Include in the planning and zoning ordinance (Title 21) the requirement of a human impact study, conducted by an independent entity, of any redevelopment of residential properties.
- The Council and MOA to insure that redevelopment of mobile home park property in Russian Jack remains zoned for residential rather than other development and that new housing developments will include open space provisions.
- Create an ordinance that prevents a landlord from forcing a mobile home from the park based on age, architectural style or original materials if the home meets the codes of the date of manufacture. This recognizes the property of the owner as worth protecting.
- MOA will draw upon the experience of other municipalities and create a plan providing interested people who choose mobile home living as their housing of choice to form an organization for the purchasing of land for cooperatively owned mobile home communities. This will be coordinated with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development Section 207(m) Program. Community Council may assist with the organizing.
- MOA to create a relocation fund where mobile home owners forced to move may apply for reimbursement of full relocation costs. A variety of resources will be explored to locate or create funding sources. Some possibilities are to offer a tax credit to developers who put money into a fund. Another is to charge a fee when a manufactured home is sold.

- The MOA Department of Health and Human Services, Social Services Division provide case management services to residents of mobile homes who are dislocated as a result of a mobile home community closing and or eviction because of redevelopment. This case management service would insure that the resident has adequate replacement housing.
- The MOA Department of Health and Human Services, Social Services Division, Safe City Program develop:
  - A list of resources available to mobile home residents who are dislocated.
  - A list of tenant rights for individuals who lease space where their homes are located.
  - A list of tenant rights for individuals who rent the mobile home.
- The MOA Safe Cities Program, rather than Catholic Social Services to create a relocation plan for residents involuntarily displaced from mobile home parks due to rezoning and insure that residents receive full funding for the costs of the move.
- The MOA Safe Cities Program create a Manufactured Dwelling Ombudsman's program that would mediate issues between property owner and tenant. This office could also gather statistical information on mobile home park living.
- Bring all mobile homes up to code compliance. This is to be coordinated by MOA Community Development Division in collaboration with the Housing and Neighborhood Development Commission. It would develop a long-range plan as part of housing and community development with this goal in mind. This year the Division is planning the reallocation of \$150,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds for Mobile Home Dislocation Assistance by rehabilitating homes for building code regulations and rehabilitation for improvements needed to successfully move.
- Create sufficient code compliance inspectors to work closely with park owners and tenants.
- Require individuals who newly rent their mobile home to bring it up to code compliance prior to the tenant occupying the home.
- Bring water and wastewater infrastructure in mobile home communities to the level of meeting municipal standards.
- The council to support the organization of a nonprofit consumer advocacy association dedicated to protecting the rights and bettering the lifestyle of

manufactured home owners. May be associated with Alaska Public Interest Group.

- Encourage residents in mobile home communities to form a homeowner's association. The association would educate members regarding their rights under municipal ordinances and state laws.
- Recommend that community council advocate with Legislature Representatives to insure that Senate Bill 6 MOBILE HOME PARK EVICTION NOTICE passes the Legislature during the next legislative session (22 Legislature). Part of this advocacy to include inserting the creation of a relocation fund with incentives for developers and setting aside a percentage of fees and property tax for inclusion in the fund.
- MOA to create a closer working relationship between the owners of mobile home parks and the Municipality. The loss of enforcement of the zoning ordinance for 10 years had a negative impact on the parks. This may result in less problems ending up in the courts. The Municipality could look for resources to help owners with upgrade costs.

**Recommended future work on Mobile Home Parks. Possible projects for other UAA classes.**

- Do a survey of mobile home residents and landlords in the two large communities in Russian Jack to determine such things as demographics, needs, experience with landlords and tenants, conditions of the home, interest in forming associations, interest in coop purchase of land, and recommendations to improve quality of life in the community.
- Research feasibility of a Mobile Home Landlord and Tenant Rights Ordinance and analyze current Municipality Manufactured Housing Ordinance
- Assist Alaska Tenant Advisory Council with organizing mobile home owners and exploring cooperative land buying venture.
- Work with United Way and other private non-profit organizations to create a plan to assist residents of mobile home parks who must relocate following a rezoning with the actual relocation.
- Work with Community Council and provide outreach to residents of mobile home communities as well as multi-family residences to become more active in the community.



## **Appendices (provided to the Council)**

1. Introduction to Social Work Class Members
2. List of project activities and contacts.
3. Selected Social Work Student's Project Journals
4. Mobile Home resident interview questionnaire
5. Park Profile Questionnaire
6. Task Force Report: Anchorage Response to Manufactured Housing Community Relocations.
7. Articles from the Anchorage Daily News
8. Senate Bill 6 and House Bill 11
9. Moving a Mobile Home Pamphlet
10. How to Organize a Manufactured Housing Park as a Cooperative
11. Atlas U.S. Mobile Home Directory
12. Federation of Manufactured Home Owners of Florida, Inc.

## **Introduction to Social Work Spring Semester 2001**

### **Class Members**

**Terrance Ambler  
Drema Bagneschi  
Marie Ball  
Keith Bodely  
Kathleen Bragg  
Carla Burns  
Tammy Burns  
Shirley Carroll  
Annette Ducharme  
Jennifer Hernandez  
Kimberly Hooper  
Marchea Hunley  
Jacqueline Koch  
Sierra Kolehmainen  
Riley Meyen  
Judy Peacock  
Eeris Setten**

**Patrick M. Cunningham, Instructor**