

**MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
RESOLUTION NO. 2024-022**

A RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING TO THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY APPROVAL OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT TO UPDATE THE GIRDWOOD AREA PLAN WITH THE GIRDWOOD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN.

(Case 2024-0074)

WHEREAS, a request has been received from Imagine! Girdwood to adopt the *Girdwood Comprehensive Plan* to update the *Girdwood Area Plan* as an element of the Comprehensive Plan, and

WHEREAS, notices were published and a public hearing was held on July 15, 2024.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Anchorage Planning and Zoning Commission:

A. The Commission makes the following findings of fact:

1. With the conditions of approval, this request meets all the Comprehensive Plan amendment approval criteria per Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC) 21.03.070C.2.
2. The Commission has heard repeatedly about the need for housing in Girdwood. We know that community members want housing in Girdwood, and it is our role to help the community achieve that within the scope of this plan.
3. The language in the plan prescribes 100-foot vegetative buffers. The intention of these was not necessarily a straight line. We do not have specific terrain information. In hearing from the community during public testimony, it is clear a visual buffer keeping the Girdwood character is the intention. This is an encumbrance for a future developer or landowner and 100 feet is excessive. The vegetative buffers may be more feasible as a plan guidance. The petitioner and staff expressed a willingness to work on this area of the plan to come to an agreement.
4. The plan talks about the difference between low-density and mixed-density and some of the impacts that would occur in areas where the views are extremely important to some of these homes. The intent of mixed-density versus low-density has more to do with form and height standards than just upping the units. The community was concerned about losing the character of those areas near the base of the mountain and wanted to keep the style similar to what is there currently.
5. The Commission commends Imagine! Girdwood, the Girdwood Board of Supervisors, and all the organizations that have taken a tremendous amount of time to put the Plan together. The update is very much needed.

6. This is a recommendation, and there will be opportunities to testify before the Assembly before a decision is made.

B. The Commission recommends APPROVAL of the *Girdwood Comprehensive Plan* to update the *Girdwood Area Plan* as an element of the Comprehensive Plan, with the following amendments:

1. To work with the Department to resolve the planning considerations for vegetative buffers and potential future parkland.
2. Update land use designations throughout the document:
 - a. Area #1. Change land use designation from “Open Space” to “Mixed-use” for the area northeast of the airport that is zoned GRST-2 and had a land use designation of “Resort” in the 1995 I, and is a portion of Tract 4, Holtan Hills Subdivision - Parcel 075-311-09 (HLB Parcel 6-011B and formerly HLB Parcel 6-011).
 - b. Area #2. Change land use designation from “Open Space” to “Low-density Residential” for Virgin Creek area that is zoned GCR-1 with a land use designation of “Commercial Recreation” in the 1995 Girdwood Area Plan, and is a portion of Tract 1, Glacier View Estates Subdivision, Tracts 20A and 20B, T10N R2E SEC 20 – Parcels 075-062-71, 075-201-01, 075-201-02 (HLB Parcel 6-036, 6-061, 6-062).
 - c. Area #3. Change land use designation from “Open Space” to “Mixed-use” for the area that is zoned GCR-1 with a land use designation of “Commercial Recreation” in the 1995 *Girdwood Area Plan*, and is a portion of Tract G-7, Girdwood South Townsite Subdivision – Parcel 075-062-61 (HLB Parcel 6-149).
 - d. Area #4. Remove the land use category of “Commercial Recreation Reserve” from the document and place these areas instead into the “Commercial Recreation” category.
 - e. Area #5. Change land use designation of “Open Space” with “Potential Future Park Land” planning consideration to “Park Land” for Tract F, Alyeska- Prince Addition Subdivision - Parcel 075-041-28 (HLB Parcel 6-075). Change the description of the “Park Land” land use category and Land Use Map to remove “(Currently Dedicated)” or note in the plan this property will be dedicated in the near future.
 - f. Area #6. Align land use designations to boundaries of platted tract boundaries.
3. Add a new sentence under the “Mixed-Use” section: “Areas near the Seward Highway, including the Old Girdwood Townsite, are subject to tsunami and flood hazards and any new development should mitigate potential tsunami risk through engineering and design techniques.” (Page 3-13)

4. Update Goal E3.1: [E3.1 ALL ROADS AND PARKING LOTS DON'T HAVE TO BE PAVED] E3.1 Review standards to allow flexibility on road and parking lot surfaces. (Page 4-3)
5. Update Implementation Action for Goal T5.1 to read: Revise current use standards in the airport district, remove use restrictions that limit opportunities for appropriate development [ADJACENT TO THE AIRPORT]. (Page 4-16)
6. Make all technical edits in the document identified in Table 1. These edits address spelling, grammar, formatting, photo credits, and acknowledgements.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Planning and Zoning Commission on the 15th day of July, 2024.

ADOPTED by the Anchorage Planning and Zoning Commission this 5th day of August, 2024. This written recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission is final.



Craig H. Lyon
Secretary



Andre Spinelli
Chair

(Case 2024-0074)



Girdwood Comprehensive Plan – status of Municipal adoption process

July 19, 2024

Context

Broadly, the Municipal adoption process for the Girdwood Comprehensive Plan has two steps:

1. Review and recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Commission
2. Action by the Anchorage Assembly to adopt the plan

The first of these two steps has been completed.

Importantly, the Planning and Zoning Commission provides a formal recommendation to the Assembly, not a decision. *Commission recommendations to the Anchorage Assembly are not appealable.* The Assembly will make an independent decision and may follow, reject or amend the PZC recommendation or make their own changes.

Planning and Zoning Commission review

On July 15, 2024, the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) held a public hearing on recommendation for adoption of the Girdwood Comprehensive Plan (GCP) as an amendment to the Municipality of Anchorage Comprehensive Plan.

The PZC's role in a Comprehensive Plan amendment is to provide a recommendation to Anchorage Assembly. This might be a simple recommendation of adoption, but typically it is a recommendation of adoption with amendments.

A Planning Staff report was released on July 9 and included eleven recommendations for changes to the GCP.

At the July 15 PZC meeting, Planning Staff introduced two additional recommended changes (#2f & #2g) and updated one previous change recommendation (#5). The Planning Department presentation and additional recommended changes are included as Attachments.

PZC heard public testimony, moved the Planning Dept recommendations, then debated five amendments, two of which passed, one failed to reach the required Yes votes and two failed on a simple majority. The amended motion was passed.

The final status of the individual Planning Dept recommended changes are shown in the table below.

Recommended Changes from Planning	Planning Dept Ref #	Consistent with GCP?
Remove "Vegetative Buffers"	1a	No
Remove "Potential Future Park Land"	1b	No
Change "Mitten"/Forest Loop (Area #1) to Mixed-Use	2a	No
Change Virgin Creek (Area #2) to Low-density Residential	2b	No
Change South Townsite (Area #3) to Mixed Use	2c	No
Remove Commercial Recreation Reserve (Area #4)	2d	No
Winner Creek extension to Park (Area #5)	2e	Yes
Update land use polygons to follow updated HH platting	2f	Yes
Change most of Alyeska Basin from low to mixed density	2g	No
Explicitly call out "Tsunami Risk" in Old Girdwood mixed use	3	Yes
Adjust language about road paving	4	Yes
Adjust language for airport development (updated)	5	Yes
Technical edits	6	Yes

Items crossed through were voted down by PZC.

The last column "Consistent with GCP?" is the Project team's judgment of whether the recommended change is in line with the GCP approved by the Girdwood community or substantially different. Rows are shaded based on the value in this column.

Next steps

These recommendations will be formally accepted as a PZC resolution at their August 5 meeting and transmitted to the Assembly. Note again that the resolution is a recommendation from PZC so the Assembly can follow the recommended changes, reject them or make their own.

It typically takes 6-8 weeks from PZC decision to Assembly introduction, so we expect the Girdwood Comprehensive Plan to be introduced to the Assembly in September. The Assembly will likely hold a work session on the plan a week or so before a scheduled public hearing and vote.

Discussion

The Planning and Zoning Commission rarely sees new or replacement comprehensive plans. In fact this is only the second case since the Land Use code was updated in 2012. There are some aspects of PZC procedures which are appropriate for almost all of the cases before them but are obstructive to a constructive discussion and understanding of new policy directions. Policy changes are the core purpose of an updated Comprehensive Plan.

Even though the format of the meeting had some problems, it was an informative discussion between Planning staff, the GCP project team, those providing public testimony and the Commissioners. Most of the recommended changes from PZC were in line with the community vision & goals, representing an improvement to the plan.

However, four of the PZC recommendations – all modifications to the Land Use map – are substantial changes from the community supported Plan. In fact these specific changes have been previously considered and rejected during an extensive community engagement process. They were discussed during multiple public meetings and addressed by public comments from the Girdwood community and other stakeholders (see Appendix 3 of the plan).

While we value the time, consideration and comments from the Planning and Zoning Commissioners and believe that their efforts will lead to a stronger adopted plan, we are focused on bringing the Girdwood Comprehensive Plan to the Anchorage Assembly and sharing Girdwood's forward-looking vision for a thriving community.

Imagine!Girdwood Board of Directors

ATTACHMENTS

A - Updated language for recommendation #5

B - Additional recommendation #2g

C - Planning staff presentation at July 15, 2024 PZC meeting, including additional recommendation #2f

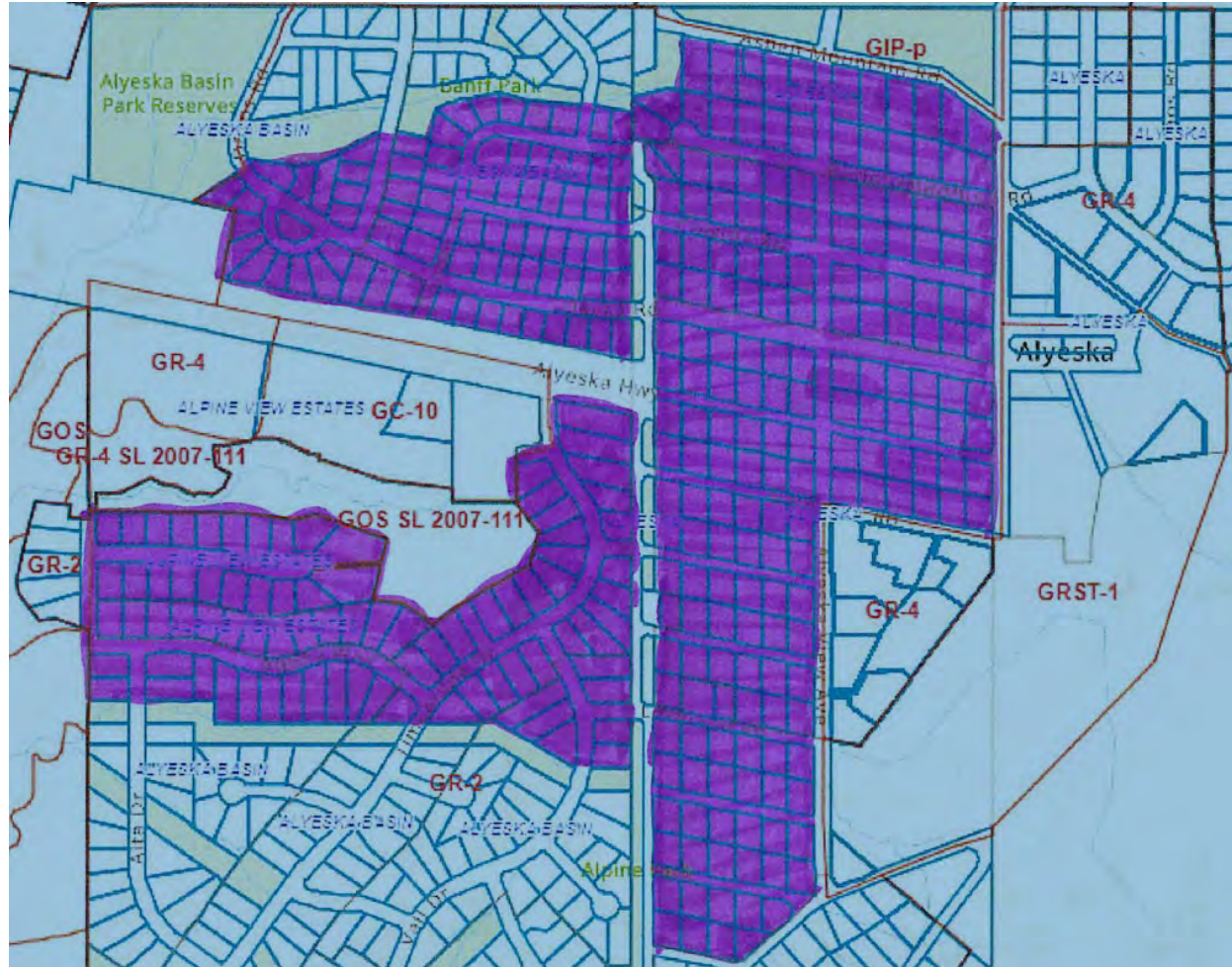
Planning Dept proposed amendment #5 (updated)

Update Implementation Action for Goal T5.1 to read:

“Revise current use standards in the airport district, remove use restrictions that limit opportunities for appropriate development.”

(Page 4-16)

(new) 2.g.



Area #7. Change land use designation from “Low-density Residential” to “Mixed-density Residential”

Staff Report Presentation

Case 2024-0074: *Girdwood Comprehensive Plan*

July 15, 2024
PZC Public Hearing

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21.03.070C.2. Comprehensive Plan Amendments – Approval Criteria

- a. The proposed amendment is necessary in order to address one or more of the following:**

The criterion is met.

- i. A change in projections or assumptions from those on which the comprehensive plan is based;**
- ii. Identification of new issues, needs, or opportunities that are not adequately addressed in the comprehensive plan.**
- iii. A change in the policies, objectives, principles, or standards governing the physical development of the municipality or any other geographic areas addressed by the comprehensive plan; or**
- iv. Identification of errors or omissions in the comprehensive plan.**











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Recommended Amendments from Staff Report

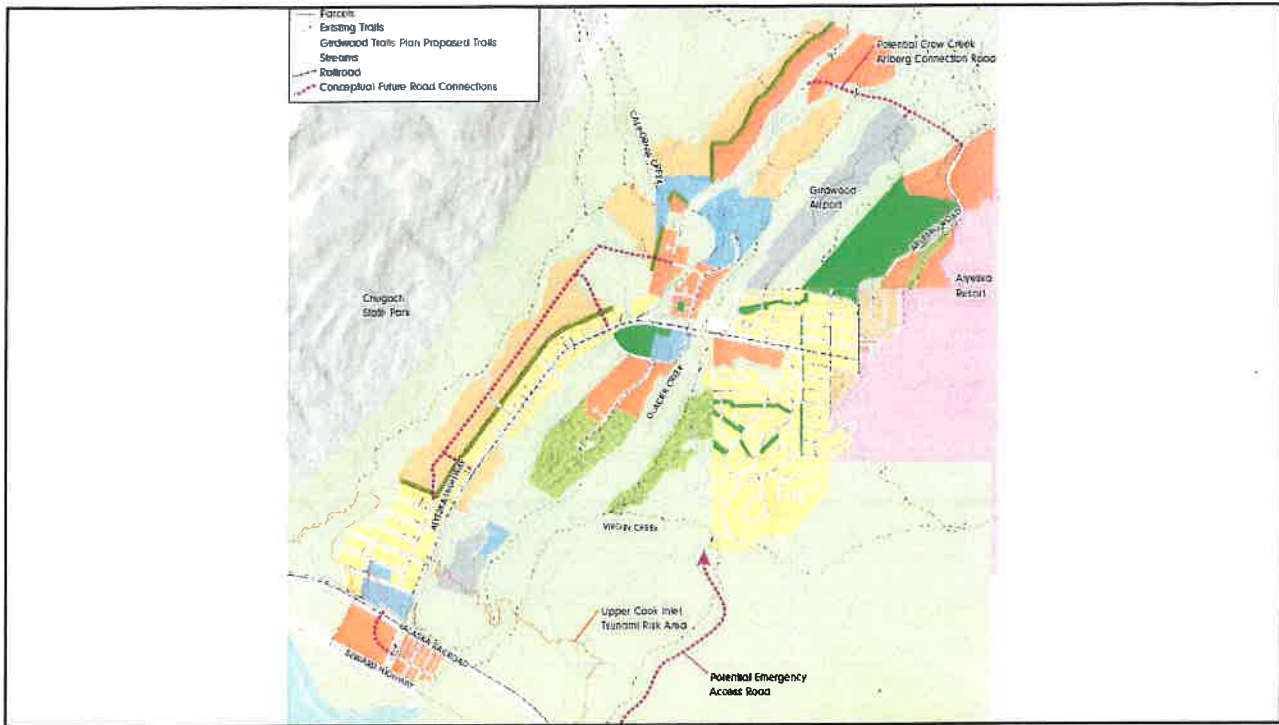


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1.a. and 1.b.

- Planning Considerations
-  Potential Future Dedicated Park Land
 -  Upper Cook Inlet Tsunami Inundation Risk
 -  Vegetative Buffers
 -  Roads
 -  Parcels
 -  Existing Trails
 -  Girdwood Trails Plan Proposed Trails
 -  Streams
 -  Railroad
 -  Conceptual Future Road Connections

6



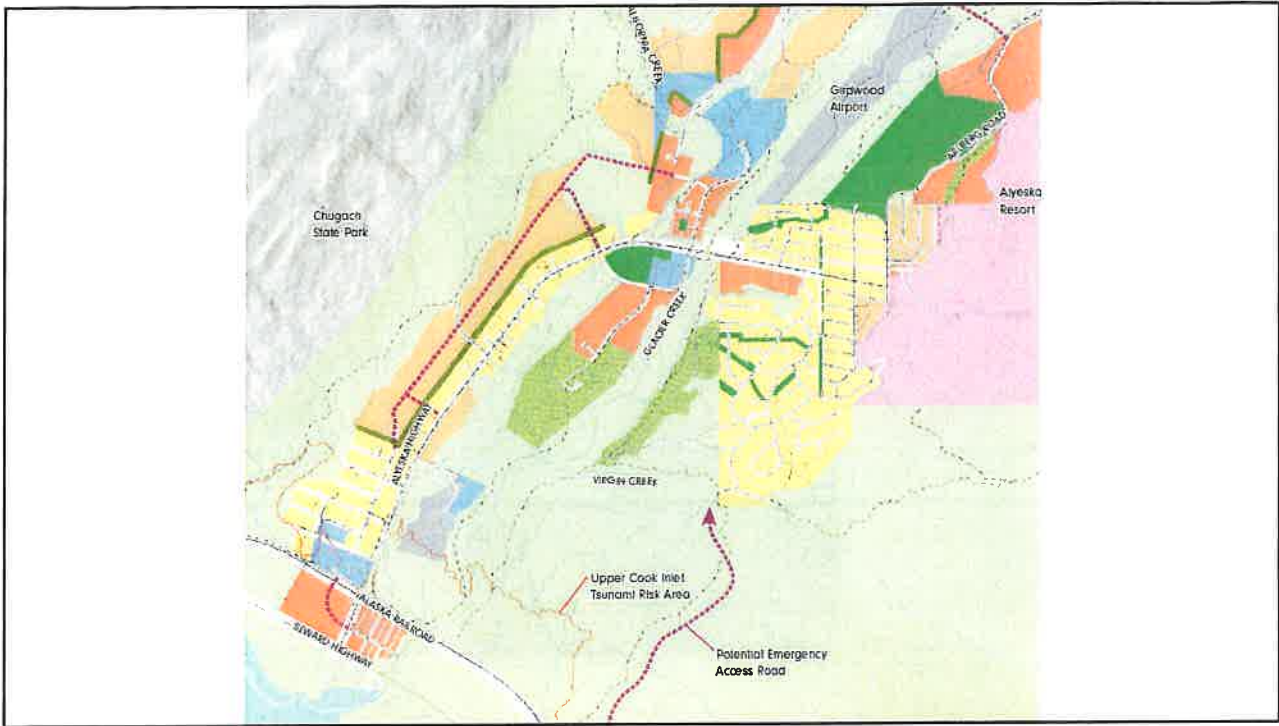
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2.b.

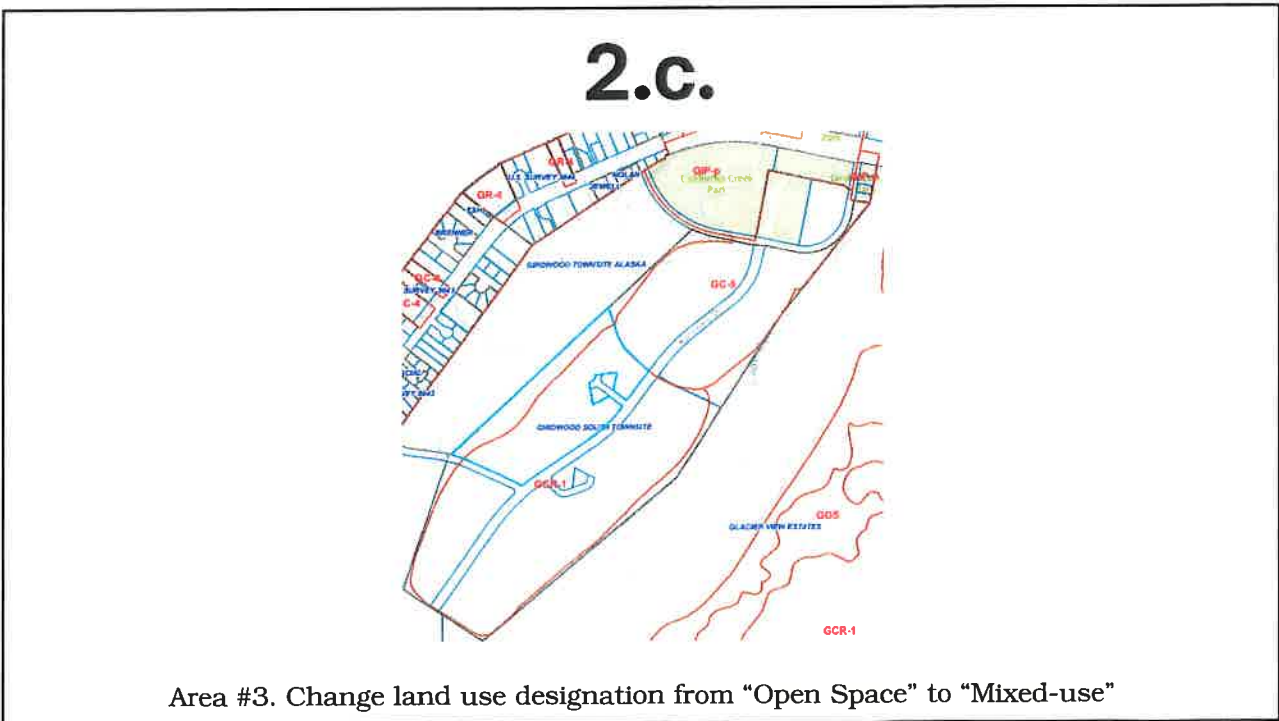


Area #2. Change land use designation from "Open Space" to "Low-density Residential"

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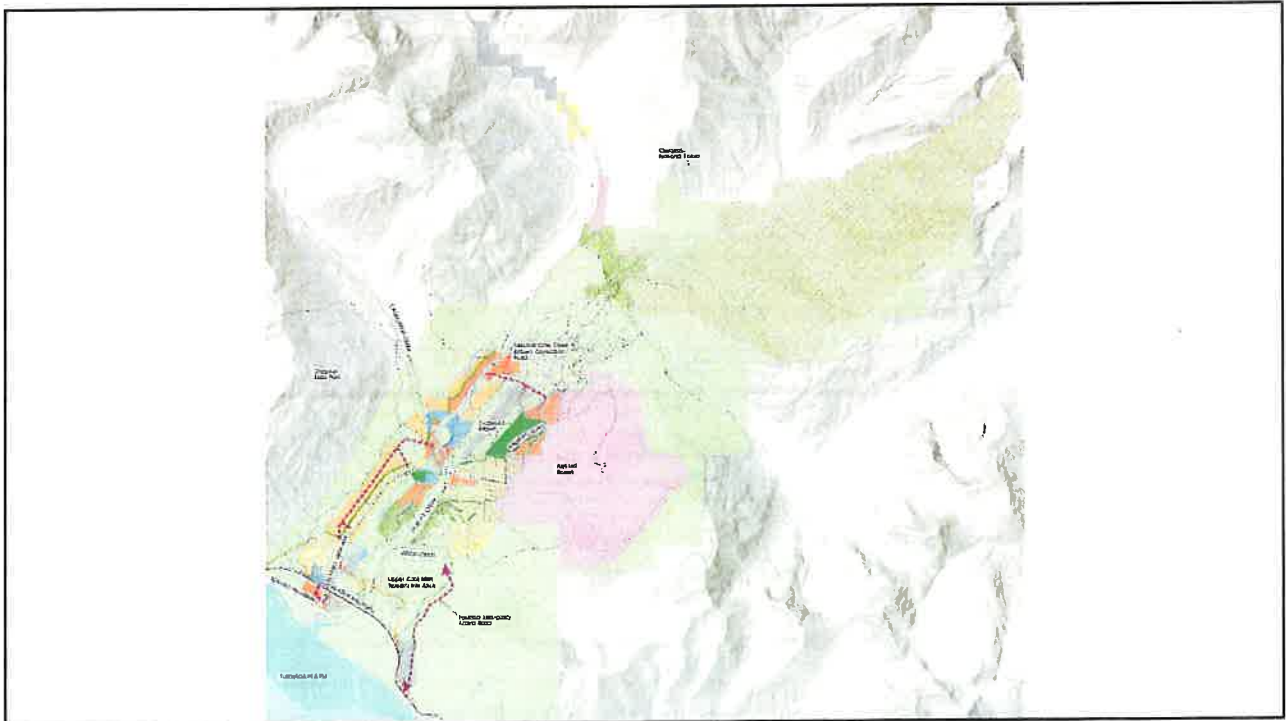


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2.d.

Area #4. Remove “Commercial Recreation Reserve” and place these areas into “Commercial Recreation”

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3.

Add a new sentence under the "Mixed-Use" section: "Areas near the Seward Highway, including the Old Girdwood Townsite, are subject to tsunami and flood hazards and any new development should mitigate potential tsunami risk through engineering and design techniques." (Page 3-13)

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4.

Update Goal E3.1: [E3.1 ALL ROADS AND PARKING LOTS DON'T HAVE TO BE PAVED] E3.1 Review standards to allow flexibility on road and parking lot surfaces. (Page 4-3)

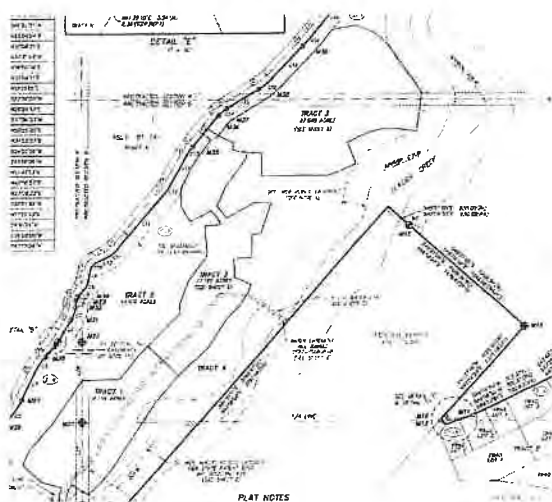
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Additional Amendments for PZC Consideration (not in Staff Report)



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(new) 2.f.

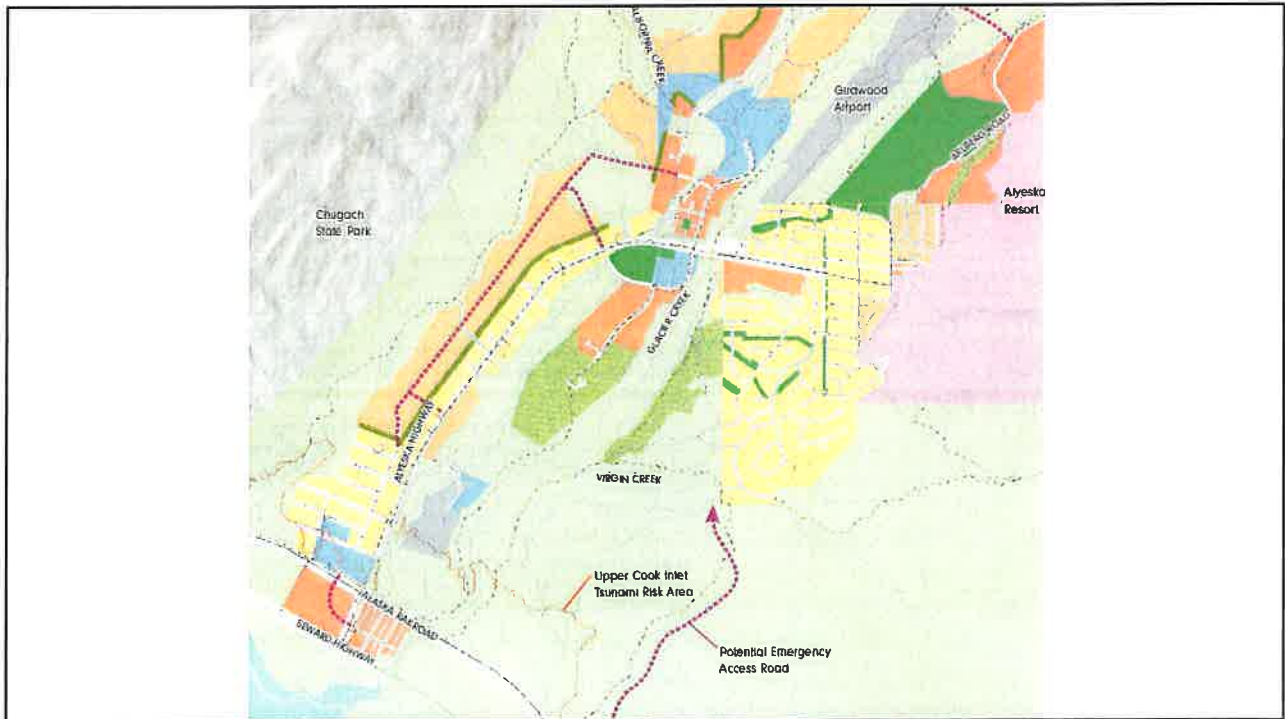


Area #6. Align land use designations to boundaries of platted tract boundaries.

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Amendments are consistent with *Anchorage Assembly Housing Action Plan*:

- Strategy A.9. Identify publicly owned lands (HLB, MOA, Anchorage School District) that are suitable and make those lands available for residential development.
- Strategy E.10. Work on recommendations to address Girdwood's unique housing challenges in the updated *Girdwood Comprehensive Plan* and future housing plans.

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Amendments are consistent with *Alyeska Area Master Plan Modification and Development Master Plan*:

- Approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC Case 2024-0061) to construct Glacier Creek Village, which will have a variety of new housing types that range from apartments to single-family homes as well as commercial space and community uses.

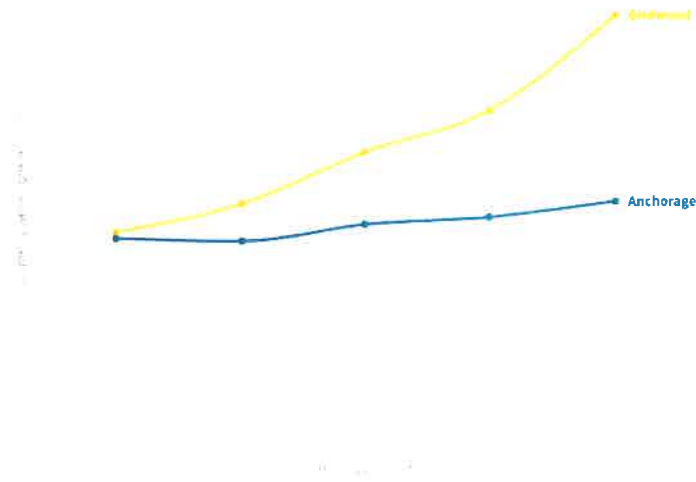
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Article Cited in Staff Report



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Average housing appraisal 2017-2021



Source: [Municipality of Anchorage Open Data](#)

● Anchorage

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Update: Activity after the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting

The Planning and Zoning Commission recommended that Huddle and the Planning Department meet to discuss two issues:

- 1) the representation of Future Parks on the Land Use map, and
- 2) how vegetative buffers will be implemented

That meeting occurred and there was agreement on two changes to the *representation* on the map without changing functional content.

1. Future Parks will not be represented on the main Land Use Map, but captured on a separate map in Section 3 of the plan. In the future the Land Use Map will be amended as parks are created.
2. Vegetative buffers will be represented on the Land Use map as a dashed line rather than a solid "area", so it is clear they are not a primary land use category. The narrative will be expanded slightly to better explain their purpose and clarify that the buffers are to maintain *established mature trees* and other vegetation, not for replanting of new vegetation . An implementation action will be added to Section 4 to list various methods for dedicating the buffers e.g. through easements, separate parcels, deed restrictions etc.

GHEC Meeting 8.5.24 excerpt of draft meeting minutes:

Girdwood Comprehensive Plan is discussed in the context of the changes of zoning proposed in the plan.

Imagine Girdwood has determined that of the recommendations from Planning and Zoning and consideration by the P&Z Commission recently, there are 4 recommendations that are in opposition to the community desires. GHEC does not take issue with any of the recommendations from a Housing and Economic standpoint.

The original Girdwood Comprehensive Plan will be included in documents forwarded to the Assembly, as well as comments from other bodies and the input from the Planning and Zoning Commission. Assembly is likely to introduce the topic in September, hold a work session on the topic, and may have hearing later in September.

GTC meeting 8.6.24 excerpt of draft meeting minutes:

Status and potential action on the Girdwood Comprehensive Plan

Planning and Zoning Commission resolution has been received. As expected, there are 4 items that were recommended to the Commission by P&Z staff that are not in alignment with the community's goals, two of which are specifically impactful to Trails efforts and not in alignment with the adopted Girdwood Trails Plan.

Group discusses how to address this with the Assembly when the Girdwood Comprehensive plan goes forward for review and adoption in September.

Specific talking points from the trails perspective are:

- Review of the history and context of the value of the lands that are in misalignment in the plans
- Duration of discussion of the Girdwood Trails Management Plan, Girdwood Trails Plan, Forest Loop Trail
- Discussion and Virgin Creek drainage.

These are all reflected in the Girdwood Comprehensive Plan that was put forward by the community. GTC was on summer break, so GTC has not yet voted to support the GCP as it was presented to the community prior to engaging in municipal process.

Assembly is likely to have this item introduced via consent agenda in September. A Work Session is likely, and then a hearing and vote. No dates are confirmed yet for any of these steps in the process and will be communicated broadly in the community once they are known.

LUC and GBOS will be discussing this at a Joint meeting on MON Aug 12.

It is noted that Barb has travel planned in September and may need to request another member of the GTC executive committee to attend the Assembly meeting.

Motion:

GTC moves to support the Girdwood Comprehensive Plan.

Motion by Kalie Harrison/2nd by Brian Burnett

Motion passes by assent vote

Motion:

GTC moves to have Barb Crews speak on behalf of the GTC in support of the Girdwood Comprehensive Plan.

Motion by Brian Burnett/2nd by Carolyn Brodin

Motion passes by assent vote