

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.



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

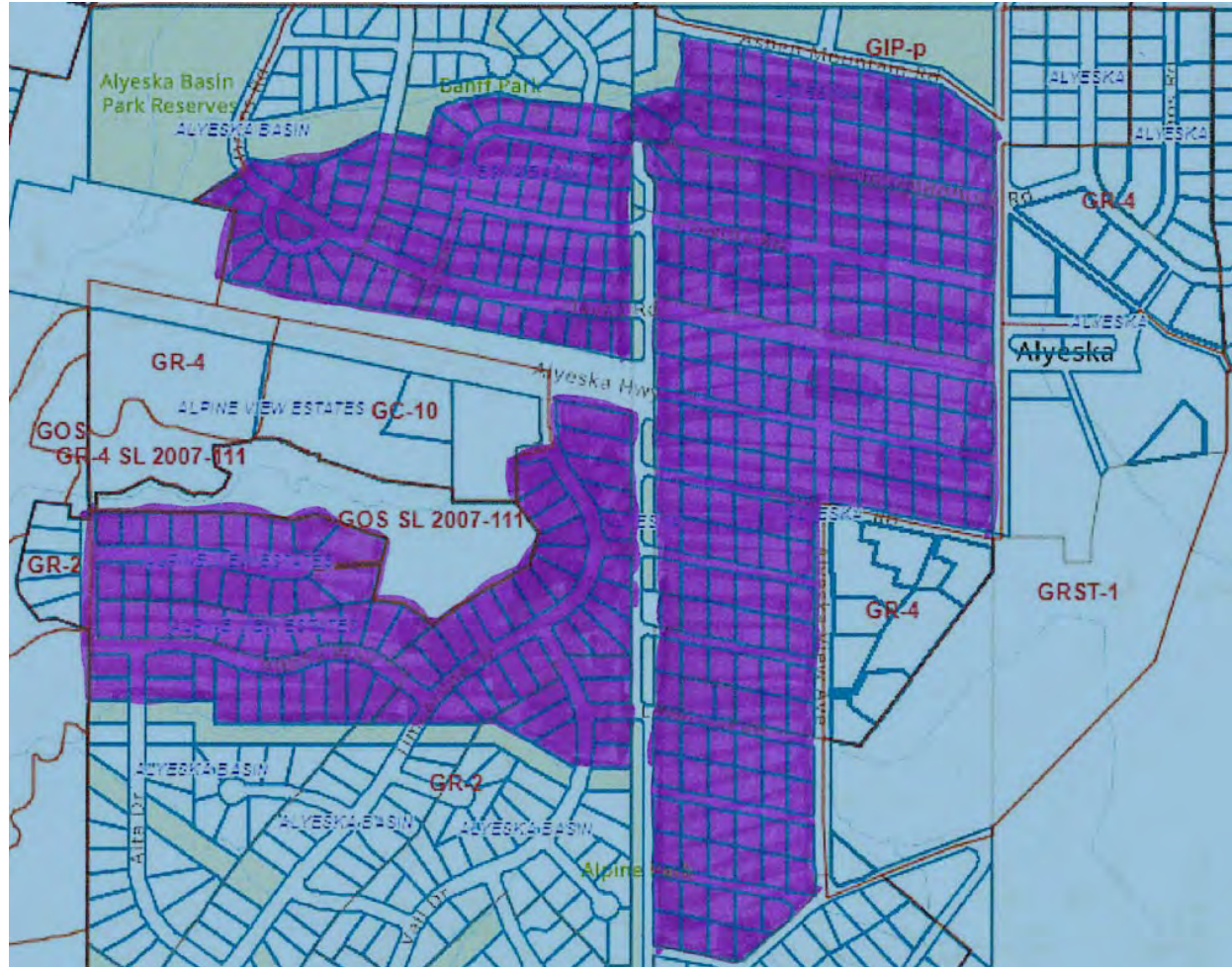
Planning Dept proposed amendment #5 (updated)

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

1

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

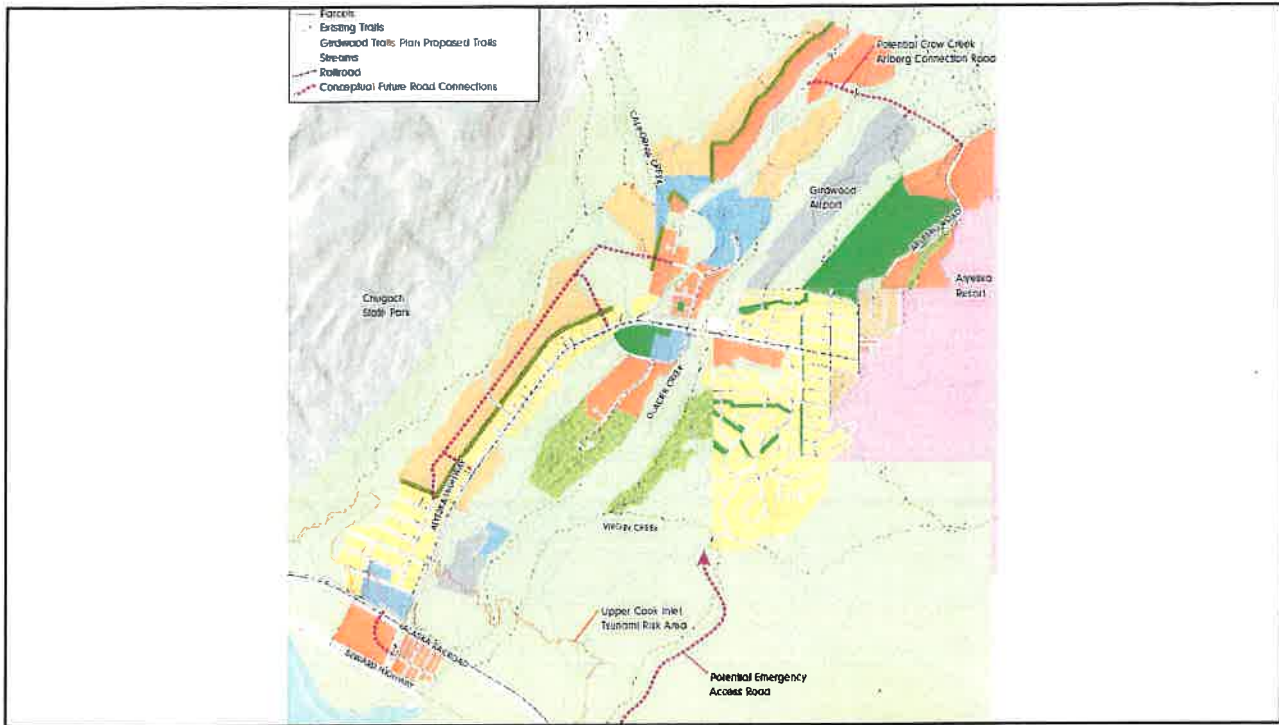


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1.a. and 1.b.

- 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



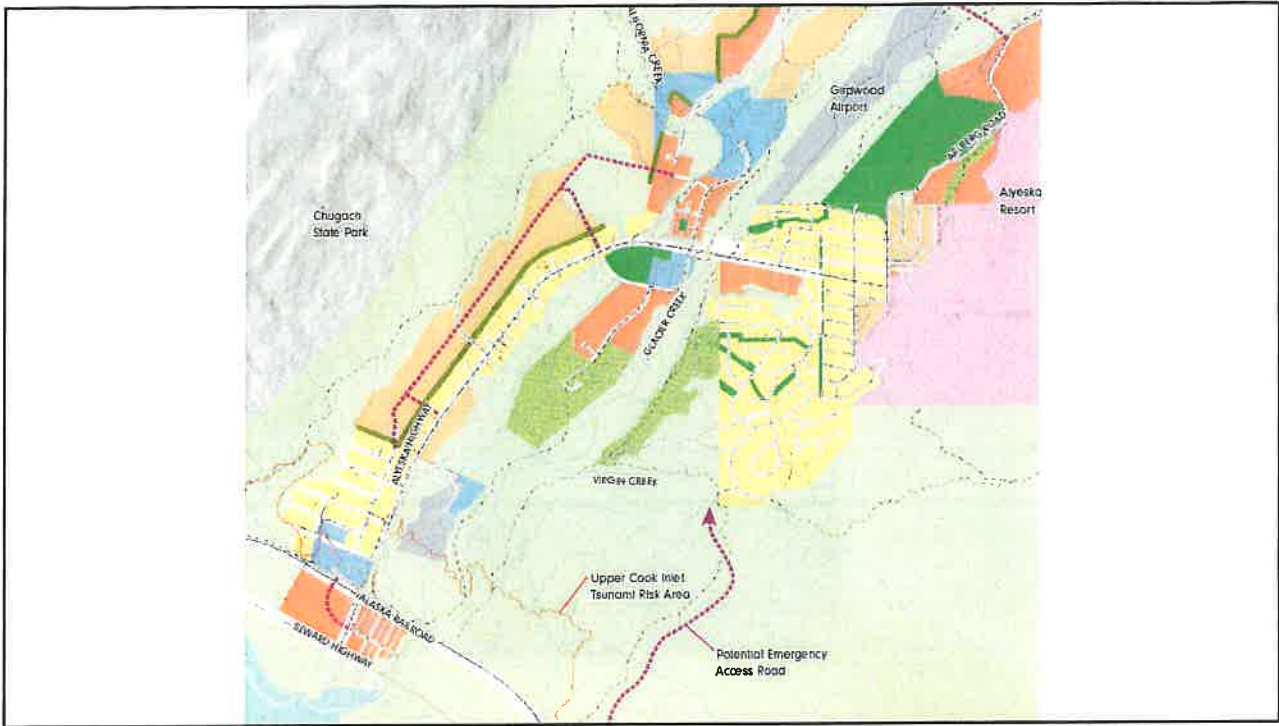
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2.b.

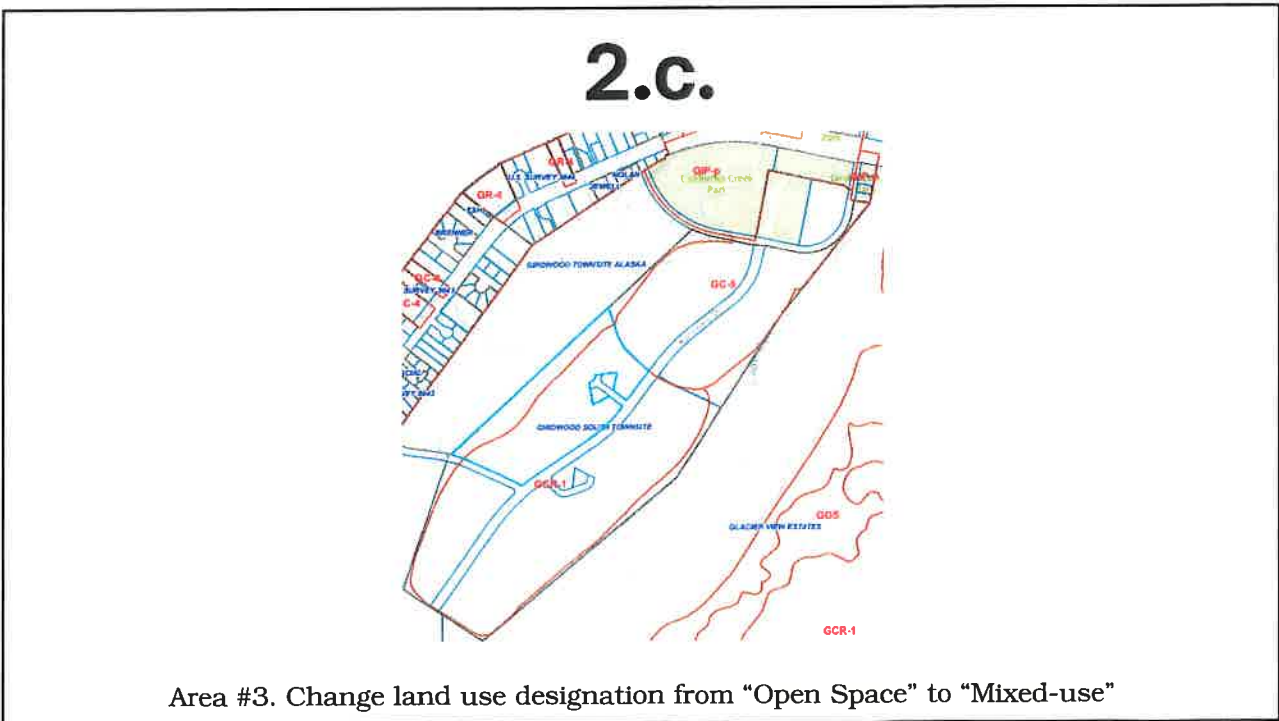


Area #2. Change land use designation from “Open Space” to “Low-density Residential”

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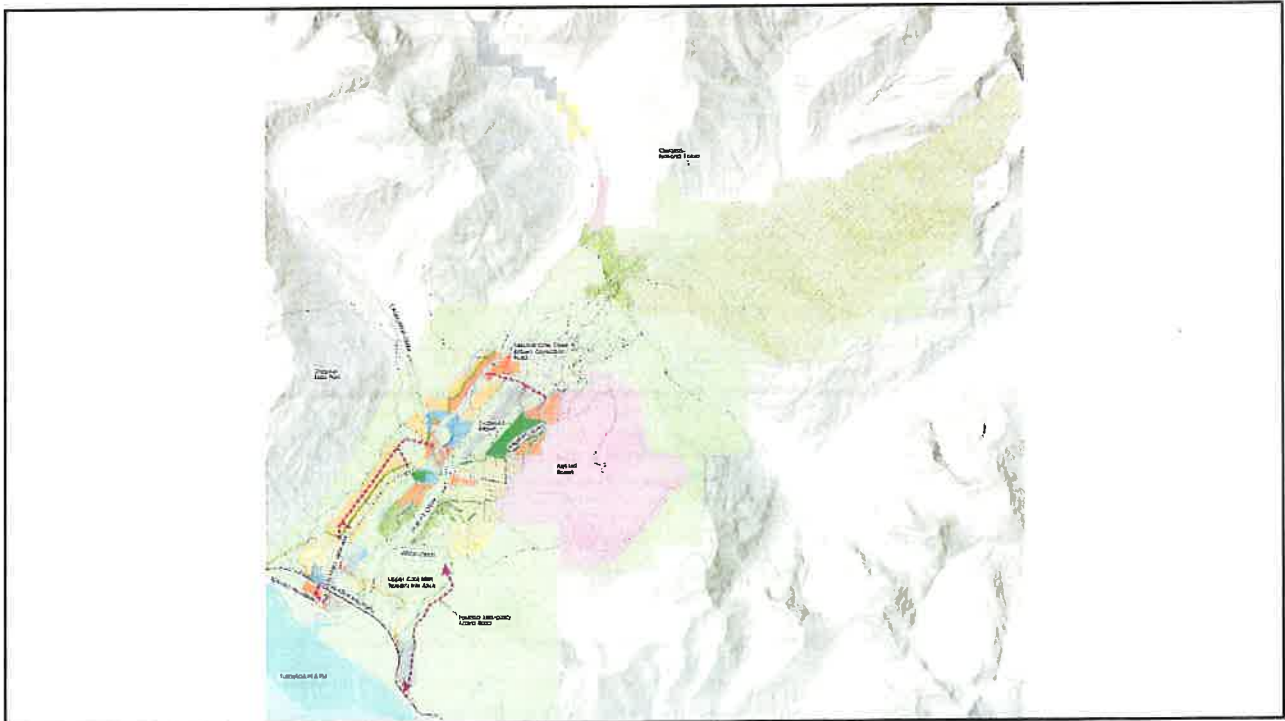
Area #3. Change land use designation from "Open Space" to "Mixed-use"

14

2.d.

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

17



18

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)

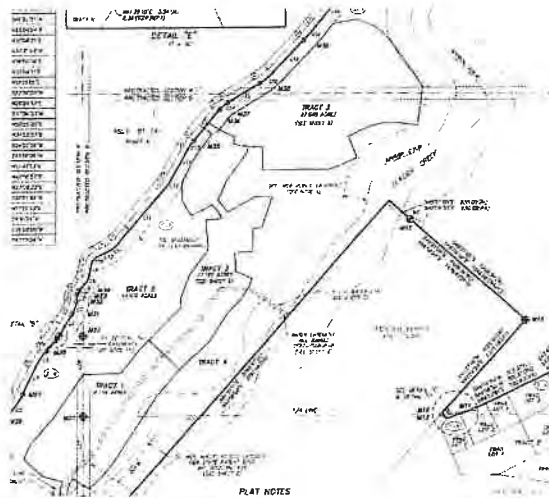
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Additional Amendments for PZC Consideration (not in Staff Report)



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(new) 2.f.

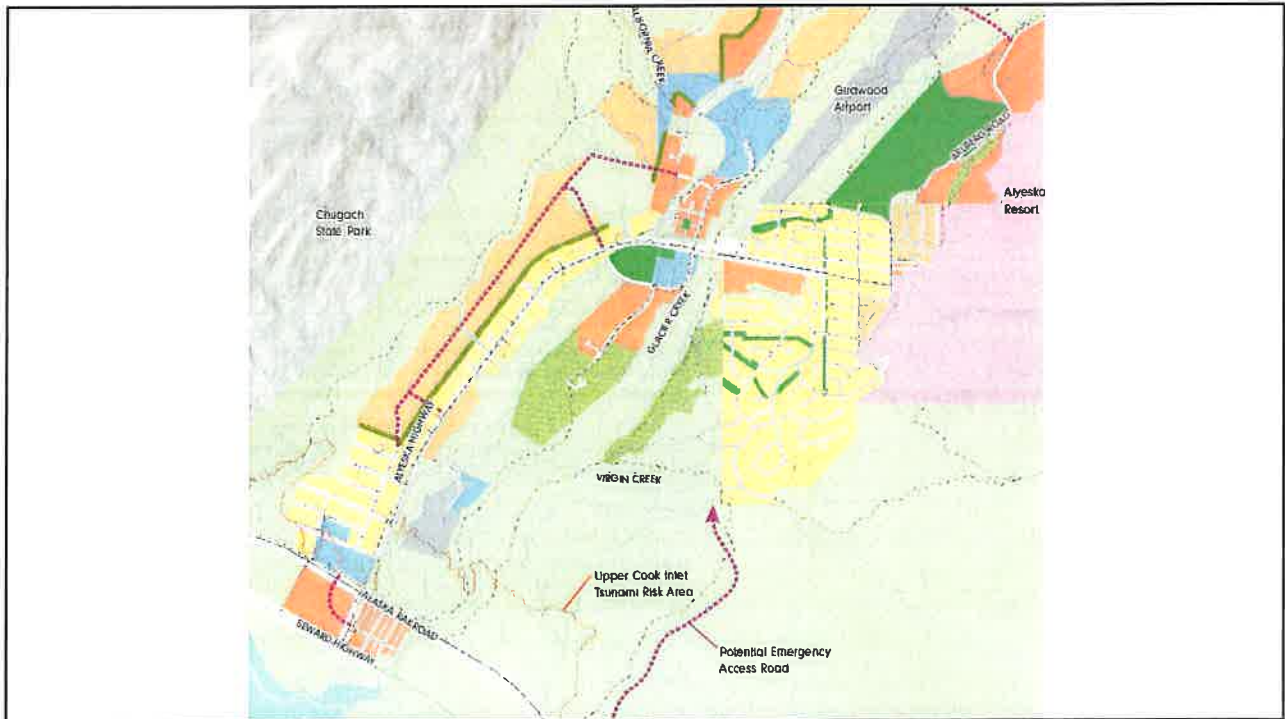


Area #6. Align land use designations to boundaries of platted tract boundaries.

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

- o Strategy A.9. Identify publicly owned lands (HLB, MOA, Anchorage School District) that are suitable and make those lands available for residential development.
- o 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*:

- o 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.

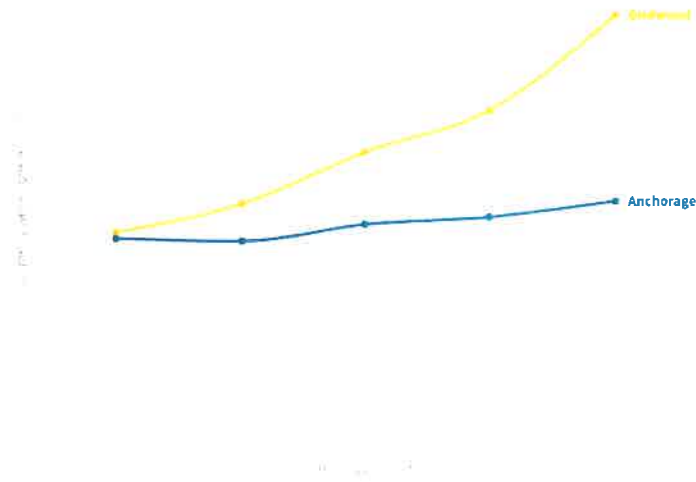
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Article Cited in Staff Report



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Average housing appraisal 2017-2021



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

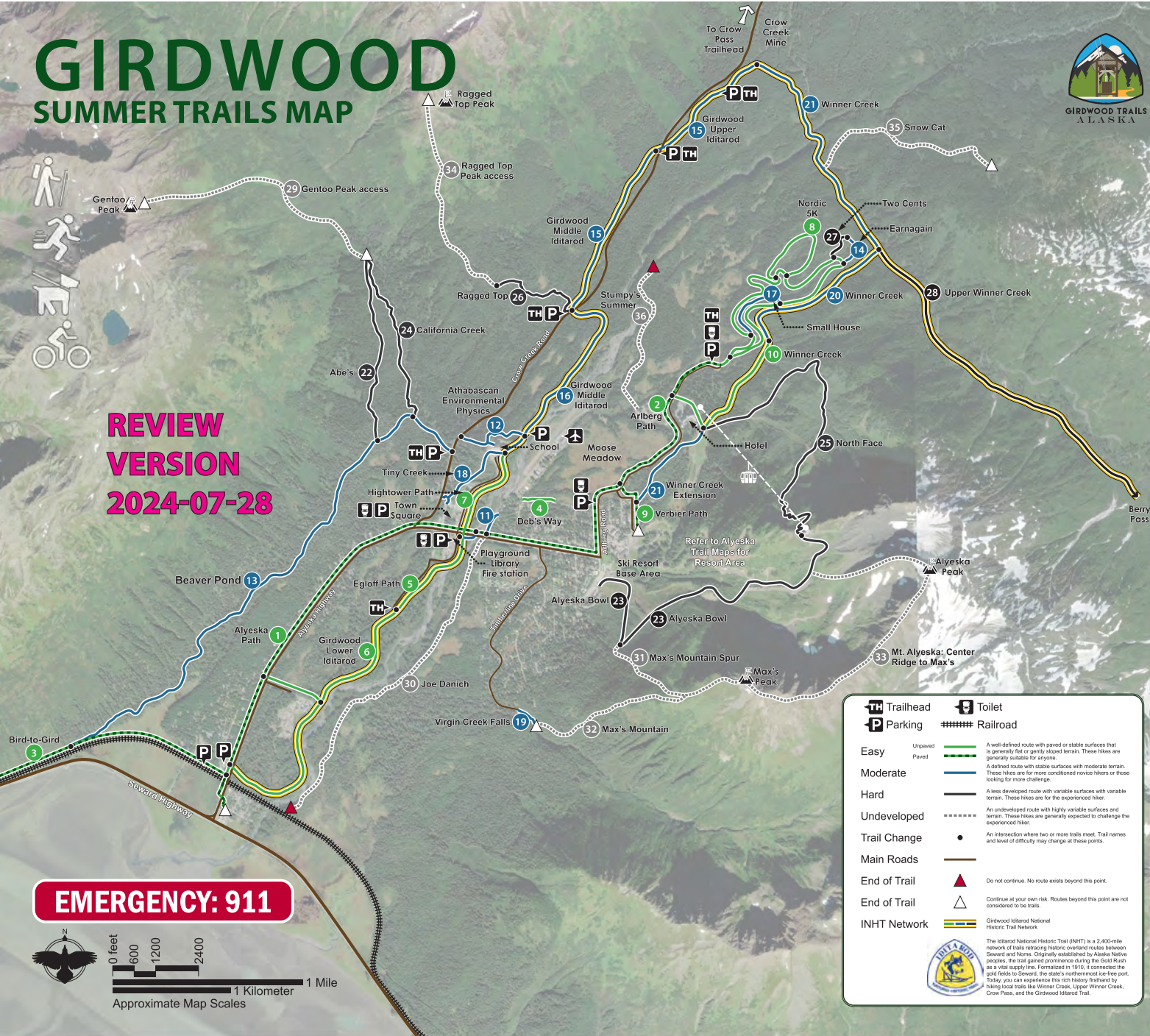
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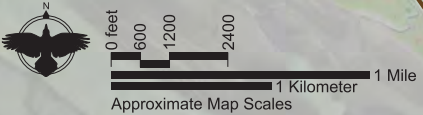
GIRDWOOD SUMMER TRAILS MAP



**REVIEW
VERSION
2024-07-28**



EMERGENCY: 911



Trailhead (TH icon) **Toilet** (Toilet icon)

Parking (P icon) **Railroad** (Railroad icon)

Easy (Green line) Unpaved Pavement: A well-defined route with paved or stable surfaces that is generally flat or gently sloped terrain. These hikes are generally suitable for anyone.

Moderate (Blue line) A defined route with stable surfaces with moderate terrain. These hikes are for more conditioned novice hikers or those looking for more challenge.

Hard (Red line) An undeveloped route with highly variable surfaces and variable terrain. These hikes are for the experienced hiker.

Undeveloped (Grey line) An undeveloped route with highly variable surfaces and terrain. These hikes are generally expected to challenge the experienced hiker.

Trail Change (Black dot) An intersection where two or more trails meet. Trail names and level of difficulty may change at these points.

Main Roads (Thick black line)

End of Trail (Red triangle) Do not continue. No route exists beyond this point.

End of Trail (White triangle) Continue at your own risk. Routes beyond this point are not considered to be trails.

INHT Network (Yellow and blue line) Girdwood Iditarod National Historic Trail Network

The Iditarod National Historic Trail (INHT) is a 2,400-mile network of trails retracing historic overland routes between Seward and Nome. Originally established by Alaska Native peoples, the trail gained prominence during the Gold Rush as a vital supply line. Formalized in 1916, it connected the gold fields to Seward, the state's northernmost ice-free port. Today, you can experience this rich history firsthand by hiking local trails like Winner Creek, Upper Winner Creek, Crow Pass, and the Girdwood Iditarod Trail.

RESPECT TRAIL ETIQUETTE

Bicyclists yield/move out of way for pedestrians.

Dogs should be leashed or under close control to avoid collisions with bikers.

PICK UP AFTER YOUR DOG

BE WILDLIFE AWARE

Trail Name	Miles	Use	Manager	Notes
1 Alyska Path	3	multi-use	GPR	
2 Arlberg Path	1.5	multi-use	GPR	
3 Bird-to-Gird Trail	10	multi-use	ASP	
4 Deb's Way Trail	0.5	multi-use	GPR	Neighborhood connector
5 Egloff Path	0.2	multi-use	GPR	
6 Girdwood Lower Iditarod Trail	3	multi-use	GPR	Mileage includes Egloff/Hightower section
7 Hightower Path	0.3	multi-use	GPR	
8 Nordic 5K Loop Trail	3.1	multi-use	GNSC	
9 Verber Way Path	0.3	multi-use	GPR	
10 Winner Creek Trail	3.5	multi-use	USFS	
11 Alyska Hwy Shortcut to Davos	0.13	multi-use	GPR	Neighborhood connector
12 Athabasca Env. Physics Trail	0.25	hiking	GPR	
13 Beaver Pond Trail	3.25	multi-use	GPR	
14 Earnagain	0.3	multi-use	BW	Trails accessed from top are bike only flow trails
15 Girdwood Middle Iditarod Trail	1.3	multi-use	GPR	Mileage is subject to USFS boundary
16 Girdwood Upper Iditarod Trail	6	multi-use	USFS	Mileage is USFS boundary to Crow Pass TH
17 Small House Flowtrail	0.5	BIKES ONLY	BW	Downhill flow trail
18 Tiny Creek Trail	1	multi-use	GPR	Neighborhood connector
19 Virgin Creek Falls Trail	0.25	hiking	GPR	Limited parking
20 Winner Creek Trail	3.5	multi-use	USFS	
21 Winner Creek Trail Extension	0.4	multi-use	USFS	
22 Abe's Trail	1.5	hiking	GPR	
23 Alyska Bowl	2	hiking	AR	
24 California Creek Trail	1	hiking	GPR	
25 North Face Trail	2.25	hiking	AR	
26 Ragged Top Trail	2	hiking	USFS	
27 Two Cents Flowtrail	0.3	BIKES ONLY	BW	Downhill flow trail
28 Upper Winner Creek Trail	9.12	multi-use	USFS	Mileage from T to top of Berry Pass
29 Gentoo Peak Access	2.5	hiking	ASP	Distance not defined
30 Joe Danich Trail	2	hiking	GPR	
31 Max's Mountain Spur	1	hiking		Distance not defined
32 Max's Mountain Trail	2	hiking		Virgin Creek Falls to Max's peak
33 Mt. Alyeska Center Ridge to Max's	1	hiking	AR	Distance not defined
34 Ragged Top Access	1	hiking	USFS	Distance not defined
35 Snow Cat Trail	4	hiking	GPR	
36 Slumpy's Summer Trail	2	hiking		

Managers: AR = Alyeska Resort; ASP = Alaska State Parks; BW = Bikewood; CPG = Chugach Powder Guides; GNS = Girdwood Nordic Ski Club; GPR = Girdwood Parks and Recreation; USFS = US Forest Service

BE A GOOD TRAIL USER

No motorized use on any trails.

Stay on the designated trail. Don't damage our fragile environment by making short cuts or going off the trail. Wetlands are closed when not frozen.

Leave no trace. Pack out all that you bring in. Dispose of waste in designated receptacles.

Respect wildlife. Bears, moose, and other wildlife may be anywhere in the valley. Be prepared and keep dogs under control to avoid harassment of wildlife.

Respect private property, stay on the trail.

Prepare for emergencies. In a clear emergency, call 911 and give your GPS coordinates. No matter where you are, turn back if you are not comfortable with the conditions.



August 2024 Report Girdwood Trails Committee

Thanks!

Thanks to the volunteers who participated in the June GTC work party! We had a great time working on removing the old bridge on the Beaver Pond Trail and revegetating the bank where the old bridge was located.

Thank you to Alyeska Resort for fundraising for the bridge to replace the hand tram at their solstice event and at the bike park grand opening! The two events raised \$2,067 in private donations for the bridge!

Updates and other business:

Girdwood Valley Trails Management Plan. Current version is posted on the GBOS website. Management Plan can be updated now that Master Plan is complete. Imagine! Girdwood. Girdwood Comprehensive plan Planning and Zoning hearing was July 15, after that it will go to the Assembly likely in September. See Imagine!Girdwood website for more information.

Repairs/Future Improvements: The trail bridge from Townsquare to Crow Creek Road has been leveled. Boardwalk repair on the trail behind the school. Start soon on installing the turnpike to resolve mud holes on the Beaver Pond trail; repair the boardwalk and netting on all trails and install netting on several boardwalk areas without it.

Suspension Bridge: Design continues with our contractors towards a complete design set for this fall and bid the project for construction tonight in 2025.

In September, we will need to discuss a Capital fundraising plan with GTC for the Suspension bridge and Hand tram interpretive center. We'll be looking for volunteers to help organize a plan and pull off fundraising events over the fall/winter/spring to help raise additional funds for this project.

Financial report: \$69,535 held in Girdwood Inc Account

Grants Status report:

State of Alaska, Capital Budget: Thank you to Alaska Trails for including the suspension bridge to replace the Hand Tram in their requests for funding of the State of Alaska. State has awarded \$1.2M for this project as part of Alaska Long Trail Funding. Construction goal is 2024/2025.

Rasmuson Tier II Grant: GVSA has been awarded funding for this project.

Alaska Community Foundation Trail Care Grant: GVSA was awarded \$2032. Purchasing trail tools with the funds.

KMTA 2024 Grant cycle: No grant cycle in early 2024. Pending info on next grant cycle

Recreational Trails Program Grant (RTP): GVSA submitted RTP grant application for work on Middle INHT Oct 31.

Responding to questions from FWHA.

Dugan Family donation for trails signs on Middle Iditarod Trail and bench at the 5K parking are nearing completion.

Remaining is the trail sign that will be produced and placed.

Dugan Family donation for reconstruction of 2 bridges on the Middle Iditarod Trail. We've started collecting materials and to work on this project.

Trail Map Project: Staff met with contractor and map committee throughout the summer should have draft map to show GTC in August.

Trails Commercial Use Permits: 2024 permits are being issued by Girdwood Parks and Recreation. Any business operating commercially on Girdwood public land and trails should have a permit issued locally. Contact for requesting permits is girdwoodpermits@anchorageak.gov 907-343-8373. Report operators without permits to Kyle Kelley: kyle.kelley@anchorageak.gov 907-343-8374.

