

## **ATTACHMENT: Detailed information for planning: Legacy/GCI tracts proposal**

The following information and recommendations have been compiled by: Ann Rappoport, Peter Crimp, Nancy Pease, and Dianne Holmes. These are intended to inform you about previous community recommendations and guidance from the 2010 Hillside District Plan (HDP) and 1999 Potter Valley Land Use Analysis (PVLUA) for incorporation into development plans for the Legacy/GCI tracts in southeast Anchorage. We believe these recommendations would further enhance the economic values of the proposed development, as well as provide better consistency with the HDP, PVLUA, and scientific and other studies regarding the area's water, wildlife, and vegetation features.

### 1) Existing Plans and Conservation Subdivisions

- We are fortunate on the Hillside to have two well-researched plans that were developed with much thoughtful scientific and public input before being adopted by the Anchorage Assembly: the Potter Valley Land Use Analysis was adopted by Assembly Ordinance No. 99-144, December 7, 1999; the Hillside District Plan was adopted by AO 2010-22, April 13, 2010. The Municipality's Planning Code, Title 21, adopted February 26, 2013, codifies these documents further. Adhering to these plans will undoubtedly smooth the process for approvals and implementation of the proposed Legacy/GCI development. This is particularly important: (a) relative to incorporating lower densities best in keeping with the area's carrying capacity given its steep slopes and pervious surfaces; (b) in order to protect natural drainageways (and thus Potter Marsh and the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge); and (c) to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Undoubtedly you have reviewed the guidelines on Conservation Subdivisions found in the HDP, chapter 2-32, which refer to a conservation subdivision with half-acre lots and 70% of the subdivision left in natural, open space:  
<https://www.muni.org/Departments/OCPD/Planning/Publications/Hillside%20District%20Plan/HillsideDistrictPlan-April2010-CH2.pdf>
- Our brief review found the defining guidance for Conservation Subdivisions as being distinguished, “. . . by several criteria. Among them is a far higher percentage of open space (typically 50-70%), wherein at least half of the *unconstrained* (buildable) land is set aside as permanent conservation areas.”  
<https://www.planetizen.com/node/67619>
- Other useful references include:  
[http://www.landchoices.org/conservationsubs/consubs\\_faq.htm](http://www.landchoices.org/conservationsubs/consubs_faq.htm) and  
<https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/winnebagopcn/files/2012/08/6-page-handout-showing-examples-of-conservation-subdivisions-Foth-and-Van-Dyke.pdf>
- North Carolina State University guidelines for a conservation Subdivision:  
[http://www.ncufc.org/uploads/Conservation\\_subdivision.pdf](http://www.ncufc.org/uploads/Conservation_subdivision.pdf)
- Our own Anchorage Title 21 addresses Conservation Subdivisions and open space at: 21.08.070 Conservation Subdivision; specifically see 21.08.070.B.6 Minimum Open Space, and 21.08.070.B.7 Dedication and Recording.

## 2) Watershed:

- Potter Creek is the last creek in the Anchorage Bowl that has almost no creekside development from source to mouth. This makes it a natural site for a model development with regard to stream setbacks and watershed protection. This would set an important precedent for upper Potter Creek.
- Groundwater recharge and run-off to Potter Marsh and Potter Creek should be protected. Make this a model in terms of preserving water quantity and quality.
- Include drainage swales and basins in order to minimize the percent of run-off that goes into storm drains.
- Consider use of on-site well and septic for the larger lots to better protect existing aquifers. Compared to sewers, septic tanks will reduce the amount of linear trenching and fill, which disrupts natural subsurface run-off. If water from the Potter Valley utility does not prove out, consider more large lots with wells. What are the options if the Potter Valley utility cannot be used for some or all of the development?
- Specify building and development footprints. Set a maximum percent of impermeable and low-permeability surface for the subdivision (roofs, paving, decks, lawns).
- We like your idea of central lawn management. That would allow control of herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers, which otherwise are legal but can degrade water quality.

## 3) Open Space:

- Locate a public open space corridor to support unblocked wildlife movements from sea level to alpine habitat through a combination of open space and unfenced large lots of at least 1 acre. One acre lots with plat notes to specify the developed portion of the lot will conserve natural vegetation which provides necessary cover and food for species such as moose, bears, and lynx.

Wildlife corridors should be designed with input from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and wide enough to provide cover for wildlife and to minimize close encounters with trail users. Width will depend on terrain and vegetation, as well as intended trail uses. We have talked with the experts at ADF&G and believe that a meeting where you could share your draft maps and ideas with Dave Battle, ADFG Anchorage Area Biologist (907-267-2185 david.battle@alaska.gov), and Joe Meehan, Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge Manager (907-267-2281 joe.meehan@alaska.gov), would be the best way to develop a positive dialogue toward the development you envision and conservation of the wildlife that makes Anchorage a uniquely wonderful place to live, work, play.

- Include limitations on fencing, as a condition of subdivision approval or as a homeowner covenant, to protect wildlife movements as well as neighborhood views.
- Design roads so as to minimize habitat fragmentation.

- As we discussed, trails and public open space add economic value to a specific lot and to an overall development.

#### 4) Trails:

- Include trail connections to neighborhoods to the north, east, and south of the Legacy/GCI tracts, and to Chugach State Park. Other parts of Anchorage have a well-developed and well-connected trail system, but there is nothing comparable in South Anchorage. See Anchorage 2020, Policy 55, page 83 in: [https://www.muni.org/Departments/OCPD/Planning/Documents/f2020\\_chapt\\_5.pdf](https://www.muni.org/Departments/OCPD/Planning/Documents/f2020_chapt_5.pdf).
- Retention of land in open space is preferable to trail easements across platted lots.

Regarding trail connectivity, in general:

- Trails along greenbelt corridors have high public value, relative to pathways that closely parallel the main roads.
- Trails within stream corridors should be set back from the stream bank.
- Feeder trails for residents can follow interior lot lines. Potter Creek was supposed to have that pattern, but the developers failed to follow through.

Regarding specific trail alignments:

- It would be a permanent public asset to locate the Moen Trail entirely within a greenbelt corridor, from Golden View Drive to Old Seward Highway.
- There should be an east-west connection along the bluff on Potter Canyon, not down in the canyon. Locating this trail a bit below the edge of the bluff would provide privacy to lot owners but still make the trail accessible without steep descents, moreover, it would offer great views and frequent connections to cul-de-sacs!
- Potter Creek corridor could become a mountains-to-sea trail: a legacy feature for the greater neighborhood.
- At some point a trail should cross Potter Creek ravine and connect to Potter Valley Road and Potter Highland trail. A platted easement exists north of England and into the Potter Highlands development. A private/public partnership to incorporate a hand tram or a suspension bridge would be spectacular!
- Most access to the trails can be pedestrian trailheads, with parking at a few sites. Parking might be accommodated on HLB land for lower trail access, and part of HLB parcel 2-156 might be used for upper trail access. Parking should be sited and designed to minimize nuisance behavior.

We and many others have talked for years about establishing a “Sea to Mountains” trail and wildlife corridor from the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge, Potter Marsh, Potter Creek and Moen Trail, on up to alpine areas of Chugach State Park. We would love to work with you on this, and believe it would be valuable in initiating a partnership that includes Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Chugach State Park, the Anchorage Parks Commission, Anchorage Park Foundation and Rabbit Creek and Bear Valley Community Councils.

5) Road and traffic issues:

- There are advantages and disadvantages on whether development starts from the lower end of Potter Valley Road (putting pressure on the Potter Valley/New Seward intersection), or the upper end, from Golden View (putting pressure on the Golden View/Rabbit Creek intersection where studies have found a signal would be unsafe). Increased traffic along Old Seward Highway would increase the danger for recreation and wildlife. Undoubtedly this will be an important discussion for the community.
- See the HDP, Transportation Study Area D, page 4-12 for a discussion of the Old Seward Highway intersection and Potter Valley Road curve (<https://www.muni.org/Departments/OCPD/Planning/Publications/Hillside%20District%20Plan/HillsideDistrictPlan-April2010-CH4.pdf> ).
- Based on Muni guidelines, it appears that the draft Golden View/Potter Valley connector road would be a subdivision, not collector road. Curves will be helpful for keeping speeds down and improving the neighborhood feel of the area. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge recent events like the McHugh fire; the HDP identifies this area as a special study area important for access/egress.
- While more cul-de-sacs and clustered development feeding a collector road in the upper, less steep, part of Legacy could minimize impacts to residents from a faster, straighter road, impacts to wildlife corridors and trails would also need evaluation.

6) Lot Sizes and Buffers:

- Ensure lots on the northern and eastern most portions of the property are at least 1 acre to be compatible with existing neighborhood lots to the north and east of the Legacy tract, with lots decreasing in size as you move south
- To compensate for these larger lots, consideration could be given to adding some denser housing at the lowest elevations, e.g., townhomes/condos with no more than a few attached dwellings per building. Again, this will allow larger, surrounding buffers of open space, which may better protect views as well as connecting trails. Many studies have found that homes adjacent to public open space have greater economic values than those that aren't so located (<https://urbanland.uli.org/news/open-space-development-outlook/> ).
- Consider reducing some lot sizes but platting in open spaces between the back yards where lots back up to one another. This provides a bigger lot feeling for land owners and better protects open space.
- Provide substantial and sustainable buffers between different housing densities – the example of 3 houses/acre abutting 1 house/acre south of the Bridgeview development provides an example you want to avoid and ample justification for such buffers. For example, a 50-foot buffer could be designed in as a trail, benefitting all neighbors.

We look forward to working with you further as your plans for the Legacy and GCI tracts are finessed, and would be happy to provide additional feedback which could be helpful as you move through the required approval steps for this development.