



Summary of Public Comments to the Public Review Draft Hillside District Plan

General

Public comments reflect general support for many concepts in the HDP, although there is some opposition as well. Some comments contest the build-out projections, maintaining that estimated timing and number of housing units still to be built are not realistic. Several comments maintain that the area designated “Lower Hillside” should not include the BLM lots or anything south of DeArmoun Road. Some offer suggestions for making the HDP easier to read and understand, such as having a separate parks chapter, removing references to revisiting issues when the HDP is updated, and making maps and figures clearer/larger.

There is some concern that certain issues are not being addressed or not addressed enough in the HDP, including: regulating towers, solar and wind power, fire safety, wildlife habitat, residential solid waste and bears. Clarification is also needed about how the HDP relates to other MOA plans, policies and ordinances such as 2020, Title 21, DCM, and the Parks and Recreation Department’s Southeast Parks Plan.

Many asked for more specific information to better understand how the ideas presented in the Plan will be implemented and enforced if the Plan is passed. Concerns were voiced about ability of the MOA to regulate, enforce and implement the Plan’s recommendations, especially since many would require interagency cooperation.

Opinions on the tax implications of the HDP were mixed: some voiced concern about potential tax increases that could be triggered by implementation of the HDP; some commented that modest and reasonable tax increases would be acceptable to fund parks, roads, and drainage improvements.

There is also some concern that code already exists for certain things addressed specifically in the HDP, such as ridgetop development and using stepped foundations versus cut pads, which could make the standards outlined in the HDP redundant and/or overly restrictive. At the same time, there is some concern about the timing of the HDP, that its recommended regulations will not be passed soon enough, as plats are being approved right now that will not necessarily meet the intent and vision of the Plan.

Land Use

Some comments indicate that the HDP is doing a good job of accommodating growth while maintaining important rural characteristics of Hillside; others want the HDP to

do more to maintain rural character. Comments reveal general support for green infrastructure, but more specifics are needed: how is the green infrastructure map to be formally adopted and maintained? Who identifies features for the map? Who pays? Some are concerned that the built/green infrastructure approach is not aggressive enough to prevent future problems (e.g., landslide, drainage issues).

Comments reveal general support for clustered development, but some maintain that the density bonus is not needed to make cluster subdivisions viable, as proximity to open space and reduced infrastructure costs should be enough of a fiscal incentive, and suggested removing the density bonus from the HDP clustered development recommendations. Several comments also requested that the HDP recommend requiring open space or trails to be publicly accessible, and that the Plan include more specifics about the size of vegetative buffers for cluster subdivisions. Landowners have concerns about roads and trails that cross their properties as depicted in HDP maps, and want to ensure that any dedications occur at the time of platting and are compensated for according to State law.

There is mixed opinion about the rezoning recommendations in the HDP: comments indicate general support for downzoning in Potter Valley, and some support for the Furrow Creek rezoning, but also some opposition to any potential increase in density. Some want to limit lot size to a minimum of 1.25 acres; others think 2-4 DUA is reasonable in parts of the Hillside. Some comments take issue with the equitability of the 7.5-acre land aggregation requirement, as the owners of small parcels in four subdivisions in the area (grandfathered in to existing zoning) cannot assemble such large parcels and therefore cannot take advantage of the redevelopment incentive. Others suggest increasing the land aggregation requirement to a 10-acre minimum in order to redevelop at a higher density.

There are mixed opinions about the proposed change to the AWWU water and sewer boundary: there is general support for contracting the boundary and a mix of support and opposition where the HDP proposes an extension of the boundary.

Comments indicate mixed opinions about commercial uses: some comments maintain that no more commercial uses should be allowed on the Hillside; others support limited commercial, especially if it is connected to parks/recreation areas/environmental education centers and/or with a natural history theme.

Comments indicate that the HDP has a good approach to wildlife in some ways, but is deficient in that it does not address wildlife corridors and has no objectives or policies specific to wildlife habitats; comments include suggestions for adding habitat conservation policy to the plan.

Comments indicate some support for extending the BSSA and Park Service Area, but also some opposition to the same. Many feel that more public access points to CSP are needed on the Hillside.

Drainage

Comments indicate general support for the watershed approach and drainage service areas recommended by the HDP. Several comments maintain the importance and need for interagency cooperation and MOA coordination with residents and the waterways council, among others. Some also point out the need to coordinate with Watershed Management on wildfire abatement, as wildfire prevention actions can have drainage impacts (e.g., erosion).

Some point out that while raingardens are a good idea, they are not appropriate for all hillside areas. Other comments ask that the HDP give greater consideration to retaining and conserving Class B wetlands. Several comments ask for specific vegetation guidelines and stream setbacks, as well as more description of how the MOA plans to enforce these setbacks. Similarly, comments indicate concerns that drainage standards might be diluted over time, as the HDP is actually implemented.

There is some concern that the HDP places too much emphasis on controlling future development, and does not do enough to address drainage problems caused by existing development. There is concern about runoff associated with non-residential uses (e.g., commercial, parking lots at trailheads, schools). There is also concern that the HDP does not adequately address drainage issues along northern border of the Hillside study area.

Comments also indicate concern about allowing higher density in the Furrow Creek area and its potential impact on the functioning of the Furrow Creek watershed; these maintain that existing conditions in the Furrow Creek area are different from other parts of the Hillside and should be addressed appropriately. There are also concerns that the requirement to absorb all runoff on an individual parcel could saturate and cause the failure of onsite septic systems.

Transportation

Several comments indicated support for less emphasis on planning for car mobility, and more emphasis on planning for pathways for pedestrians and bicycles. Landowners have concerns about roads and trails that cross their properties as depicted in HDP maps, and want to ensure that any dedications occur at the time of platting and are compensated for according to State law.

Roads

Comments indicate some concern that the State Department of Transportation has not been more involved in the HDP, and particularly that the HDP does not address State-owned roads; some call for more coordination with the State on road planning for the Hillside.

There is some concern about maintaining the character of Hillside roads, asking for more attention to and/or citation of the MOA Executive Order on Context Sensitive Design and Solutions. Some offer cautions about the design and

construction of new roads on Hillside, maintaining that flexibility for road grades is important and should not be compromised.

There is some concern about a lack of north-south connectivity for roads, and a call for clarity about coordinating street and trail/pedestrian connectivity. Several comments request traffic counts upon which to base road planning decisions.

Comments indicate concern about and/or opposition to certain proposed road connections (e.g., Huffman extension, Elmore extension from Tudor to Rabbit Creek, road to connect Goldenview with Potter Valley road, Potter Valley loop road, others), and alternatives are suggested in some cases. Comments also request that the HDP include plans to upgrade the southern portion of Old Seward as a low-speed country lane-type road with a path to walk/bike on. There is some concern about the potential increase in density proposed by the HDP for the Furrow Creek areas causing problems due to adding traffic to Huffman and O'Malley. There is also some concern that the HDP does not adequately address improvements needed on some roads and intersections (e.g., Goldenview Drive, Legacy Pointe, Rabbit Creek and Elmore intersection, others).

Public sentiment about the proposed HRDTSA is mixed: some support the service area, citing the need for more road maintenance; others prefer to maintain their own roads through LRSAs/independents.

Several comments indicate support for bus service/public transportation on the Hillside.

Trails

Several comments support an integrated trail/greenway system, including support for more public trails, connecting subdivisions, and for the set-aside of trails/trail easements in all developments. Some would like the HDP to go beyond the 1997 Areawide Trails Plan, to include suggested strategies for negotiating with landowners to address the current lack of easements and reliance on section lines and road ROW for path routes. Others support more trails along roads to encourage alternative transportation.

Some comments indicate concerns about trail design. Some request that MOA trail standards be flexible, maintaining that paths along roads should be separated from the road but do not have to be wide or paved. While there is some concern about locating trails along streams or within close proximity to existing homes, comments also suggested working with a professional trail designer to address potential impacts before ruling out potential routes entirely.

There is general support for increased CSP access and the ability to recreate on Hillside. Comments show support for proposed trailheads and accompanying parking areas, but many have strong concerns about the proposed Grandview/Stolle parking lot and trailhead. Alternative suggestions for trailheads with larger parking lots are offered: Brewster's and somewhere along the Stewart Road back in Potter Valley, with a connection between these two places; also a

Clarks Road trailhead with connectivity between Section 36 and CSP along the ridgeline. An additional Rabbit Creek trailhead is suggested: on publicly maintained roads, not adjacent to neighborhood, with multiple access routes and connectivity to CSP. Some maintain that trailheads need to include some parking, both for visitors and maintenance and due to concerns that CSP access does not become exclusive to property owners along the park border.

Comments also include suggestions for new pathway connections (e.g., extend to the south the existing path that ends on DeArmoun; connect Section 36 to public lands on the north side of Grandview/Stolle and include a secondary trail on the Paine Road ROW and Section line 6; upgrade Old Seward to include a multi-use path).

Comments also request additional clarification about the role of the HDP versus the Parks and Recreation Southeast Anchorage Parks Plan (was the HDP supposed to update the park inventory?), as well as more information on coordination with CSP staff and policies.

Water and Wastewater

There is general support for public education and the water quality monitoring program, but more specifics are needed: how will water wells be monitored? What pollutants and elements being targeted? In what areas? Comments asked for better definition of problem areas (with suggestions for additional protection zones), stronger depiction of challenge areas (several comments cited the onsite maps in the HDP as a good example), more field data, and a stronger monitoring program. Some maintain that existing available data should be used first.

Reactions to the onsite proposals also mixed: some say that innovative onsite proposals make sense for Hillside, while others express concerns about a number of elements including: technical aspects of the onsite portion of the HDP and Supplemental report; the revisions to the onsite wastewater system standards; potentially misleading and/or out-of-date information included on maps.

Comments also asked for more emphasis on proper maintenance of onsite systems, more information on how current traditional systems will be affected by these regulations if they are passed, and for assurances that new wastewater standards have been proven to be effective in subarctic regions, are needed and scientific. There are also concerns that the requirement to absorb all runoff on an individual parcel could saturate and cause the failure of onsite septic systems.

Opinions about the proposed change to the AWWU water and sewer boundary are also mixed: there is general support for contracting the boundary and a mix of support and opposition where the HDP proposes an extension of the boundary.

Some prefer to keep existing private well and onsite septic systems, some (with a history of existing problems) want water/sewer, while others prefer neighborhood systems to sewers and would like to maintain that option over sewers.

There are concerns about the connection between sewer extension and an unwanted density increase, as well as the cost of water/sewer extension. The question was also raised that if water and sewer is needed in the Furrow Creek area, could the HDP recommend the area to have preference for CIP funding for the extension of water and sewer lines?

Implementation

Many comments ask for more specific information to better understand how the ideas presented in the Plan will be implemented and enforced if the Plan is passed. Some feel that stronger regulation is needed on the part of the MOA, yet comments also reveal concerns about the ability of the MOA to regulate, enforce and implement the Plan's recommendations, especially since many would require interagency cooperation. Many also fear that the HDP vision will be lost as implementation details are worked out.

Comments asked for more information about where funds will come from to do implementation actions and who will be responsible for them, based on the concern that the MOA does not have the revenue base to support the goals and recommendations of the HDP. Comments also asked for greater clarity on how citizens will be involved in future implementation actions.

Opinions on the tax implications of the HDP were mixed: some voiced concern about potential tax increases that could be triggered by implementation of the HDP; some commented that modest and reasonable tax increases would be acceptable to fund parks, roads, and drainage improvements.

Regarding specific implementation actions:

- Comments expressed the desire to make the built/green infrastructure approach mandatory for developers, not optional.
- Specific vegetation guidelines and stream setbacks are requested.
- Comments request that green infrastructure and watershed management be more integrated.
- Comments request greater clarity about how an overlay district would relate to existing zoning under Title 21.
- Slope standards are requested to apply at lower elevations as well as upper elevations.
- Comments expressed opposition to density bonuses and the 10,000 square-foot minimum lot size.
- Comments indicate some support for extending the BSSA, but also some opposition.
- Comments request that Watershed Management and Building Safety Divisions work together better.

- Comments show the concern that there will be conflicts with imprecise Firewise clearing recommendations and HDP goals for vegetation and drainage control.
- Some support the HRDTSA, while others prefer to maintain their own roads through LRSAs or homeowners' associations.
- Flexibility for road grades and trail standards is requested.
- There is some support for the well management program, but there is also some opposition.
- Concern that disallowing clustered septic systems within AWWU certificated area, coupled with 10,000 square-foot lots is a direct invitation for extension of public utilities on land south of Rabbit Creek Road.
- Some support the Chugach Access Bond Measure.
- Comments indicate some support for extending the Park Service Area, but also some opposition to the same.
- More mention of securing easements and land acquisition for parks and trails is requested.

There is also some concern that code already exists for certain things addressed specifically in the HDP, such as ridgetop development and using stepped foundations versus cut pads, which could make the standards outlined in the HDP redundant and/or overly restrictive. At the same time, there is some concern about the timing of the HDP, that its recommended regulations will not be passed soon enough, as plats are being approved right now that will not necessarily meet the intent and vision of the Plan.