

Attachment

Questions/Concerns Raised by RCCC Residents with Answers/Potential Remedies

The benefits and drawbacks for any new land management proposal in the Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) area are typically evaluated by our Land Use and Transportation Committee (LUTC) and further discussed at a monthly Council meeting where a position on the proposal will be put up for a vote. As described previously, RCCC endorsed the proposal for the Potter Marsh Watershed Park by a vote of 27 ayes, zero nays, and 2 abstentions, at our November 9, 2023, meeting, after researching and discussing the following concerns.

Fire breaks – we obtained information from a retired Anchorage Fire Department resident in our Council area who also has 6 years of hotshot wildland fire-fighting experience.

The proposed Potter Marsh Watershed Park has very few spruce trees. It is characterized by open meadows, with stand-alone mature trees. It already has some characteristics of a firebreak. However, a traditional firebreak here would make no difference in the most dangerous scenario, which would be a wildfire driven by southeast winds. Prevailing southeast winds can cause embers to loft 200 to 400 yards.

Fire egress

Because this parcel was slated for a senior condominium development at the time of the Hillside District Plan, that Plan called for a special study area for a possible collector road to increase east-west connectivity from Golden View Drive.

The Hillside District Plan has important qualifiers:

1. Actual creation of many of these roads and trail routes would hinge upon the pace and location of future development.
2. Routes need not be constructed in the exact location as depicted on the HDP map.

We question whether a connector road at this location would be worth the cost and disruption of this hillside habitat and drainage area? For cost efficiency and minimal impact to the environment, any major new roads or connections should serve as collectors for surrounding homes, as well as for egress. If homes are not developed here, there would be no need to provide new access for them. This led the LUTC to look at alternative egress routes that can be completed, upgraded, or signed for emergency egress, and likely at a lower cost.

We found that the most entrapped neighborhoods—only one practical way in and out—are Potter Valley (on the south side of Potter Creek), and Bear Valley. This location would do nothing to improve egress for either. In fact, for first responders in the face of a wildfire driven by southeast winds, Golden View offers a much better approach because of visibility and the options for turn off if retreat is necessary.

The most critical connection for Potter Valley is improvement of the Golden View Drive to Potter Valley Road connection via Portugal-Finland streets (Map 1).¹ If there is only funding for one major road connection every decade or so (as we've seen with the prolonged funding for Mountain Air Drive), then it seems the Portugal-Finland streets connection or Bear Valley should be priorities. The work of our Resilience Committee and Jen Schmidt of UAA's Institute of Social and Economic Research's likely offer additional information about those options.

¹ Maps 1-4 result from analysis by RCCC residents with reference to the Hillside District Plan

For the south Golden View area, there are several existing routes that can be upgraded and managed for evacuation and ingress of first responders:

- East-west connections from Bettijean and East 164th that connect into Virgo and Tideview to the Old Seward Highway (Map 2).
- Bridgeview connections to South Park Bluff Road and the Old Seward Highway (Map 3).
- New and future connections east of Golden View to connect residents onto Mountain Air Drive and then to Hillside Drive; this is the area where we are seeing much current and proposed home developments (Map 4).

Trail development –

- There is an existing informal network of trails that residents have used for over 25 years (evidenced by our Council's 1997 letter). With the installation of signage, these trails will be accessible to the public.
- The public will have a strong voice in formal trail design and management during development of a Park Master Plan. This planning effort will be led by the Municipal Parks and Recreation Department. The public can influence the scale and scope of future upgrades, within any limits set by the conservation agreement (for example, trails will be for non-motorized use).

The need for recreation access – who needs this? Who benefits?

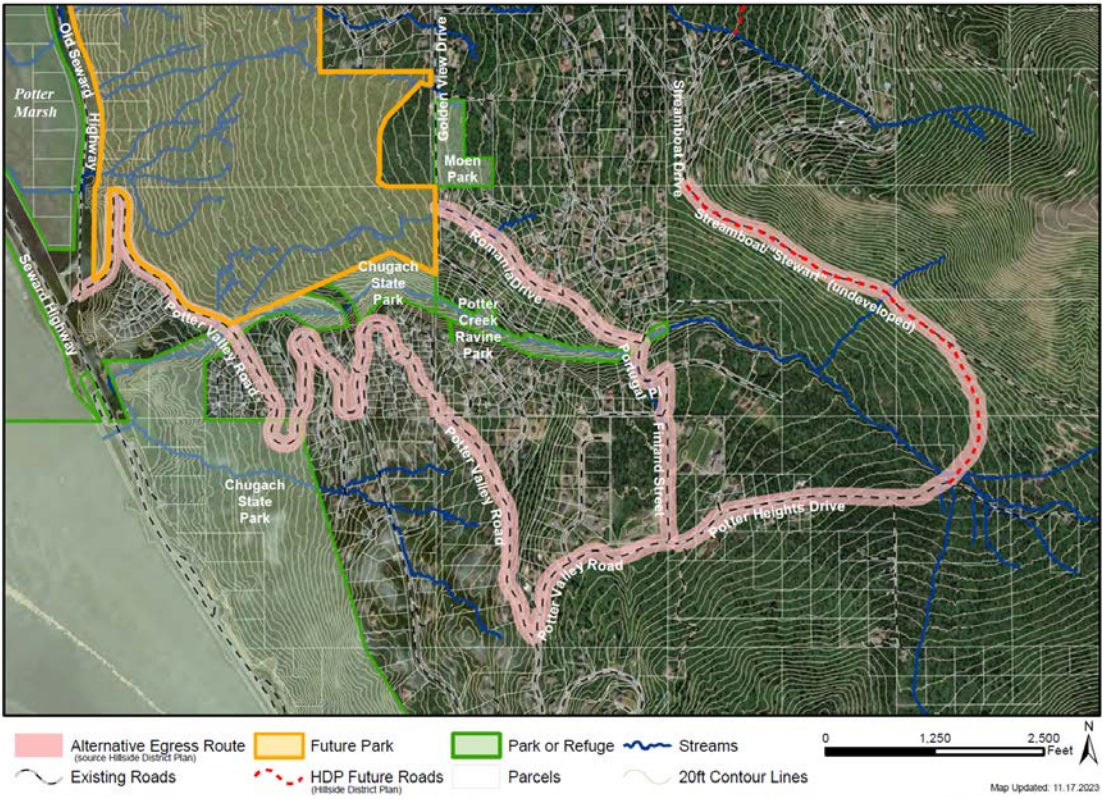
- South of O'Malley Road, there are almost no developed trails and only a couple of roadside pathways. This dearth of trails means the rest of Anchorage has no access to the amazing views and sunny exposure on the south Hillside.
- RCCC is egregiously lacking in pedestrian pathways, even on main roads like Rabbit Creek Road, Golden View Drive, and Old Seward Highway. Many smaller roads do not even have shoulders. Our residents walk in the roadways, which is increasingly dangerous, or they drive to use trails at Hillside or Kincaid.

Parking and road maintenance – minimizing neighborhood impacts -

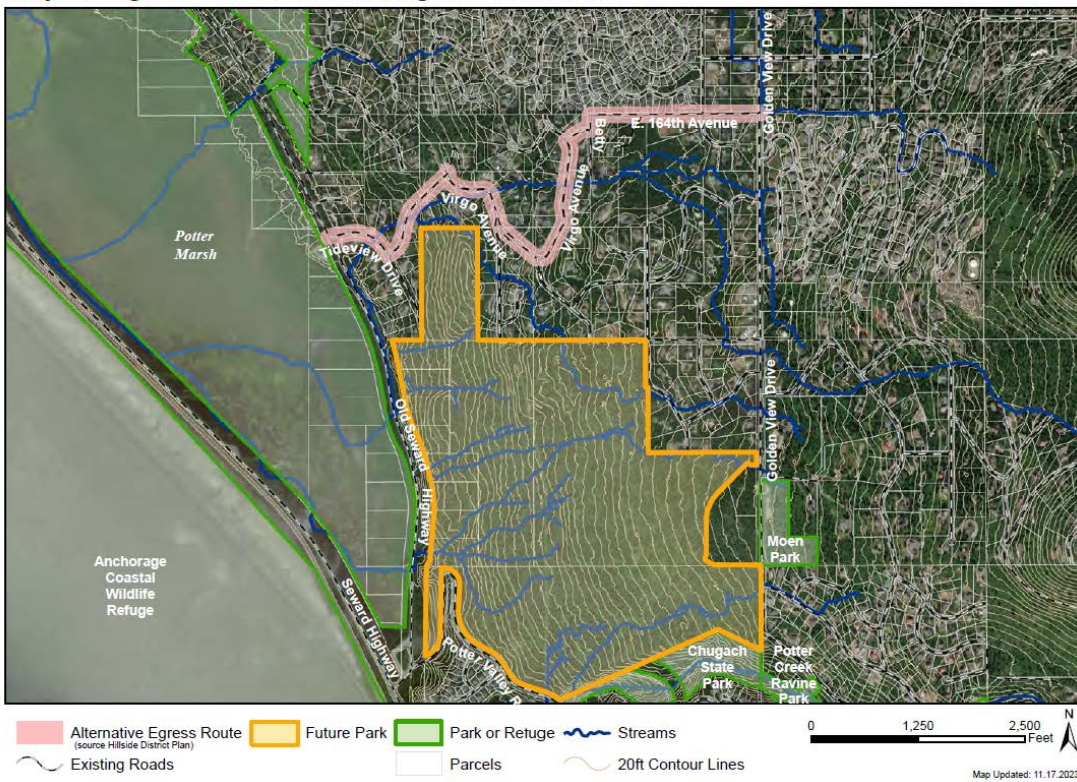
- This Park is extremely fortunate to have two existing parking areas located on major collector roads.
 1. The South Potter Marsh Parking Pull Out has just been paved and upgraded with approximately 50 parking spots, and two vaulted toilets will soon be installed.
 2. Moen Park on Golden View Drive has paved parking just across the street from the proposed Potter Marsh Watershed Park.
- The Potter Marsh and Golden View trailheads are obvious magnets for visitors who will arrive by car, because they are easy to find; they have other amenities; and they are located at logical starting points in the trail system on major well-maintained roads.
- Neighborhood connection points are not slated for parking. Walk-in trailheads are common at other municipal parks bordered by homes. If neighbors want developed parking at other locations, that could be discussed during the Park Master Plan process.

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Map 1. Egress via Potter Valley & proposed Upper Valley

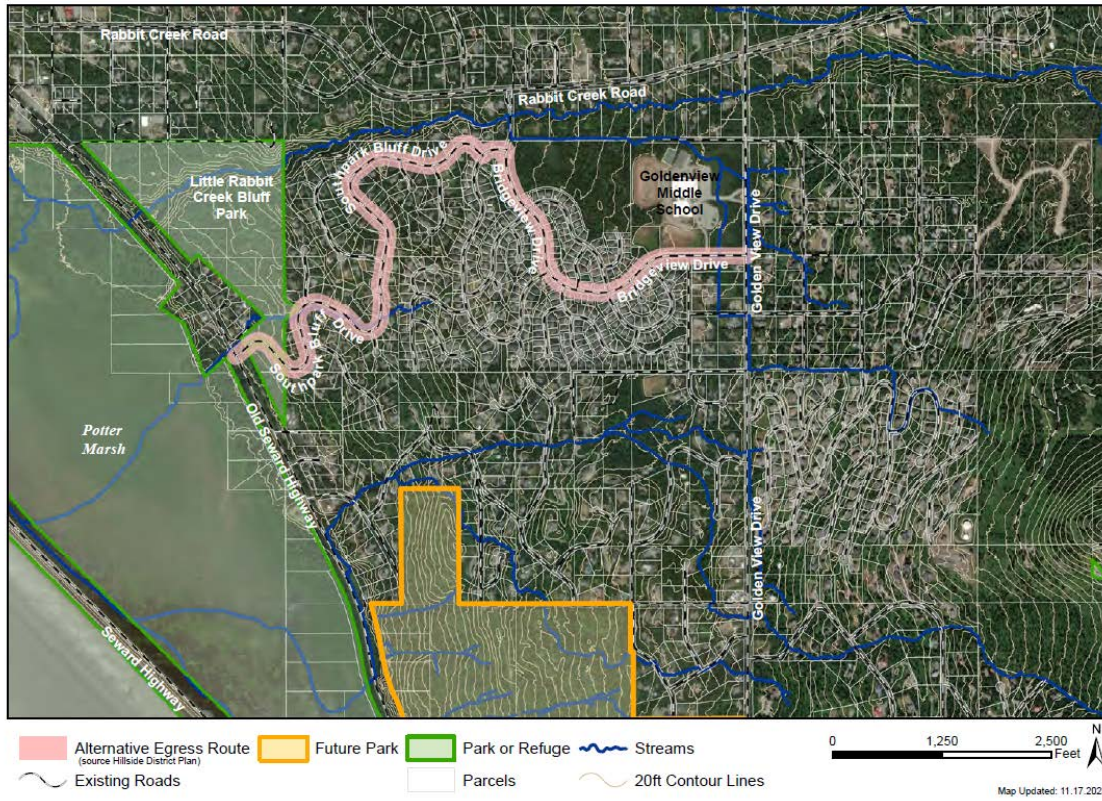


Map 2. Egress via E. 164th, Virgo, & Tideview

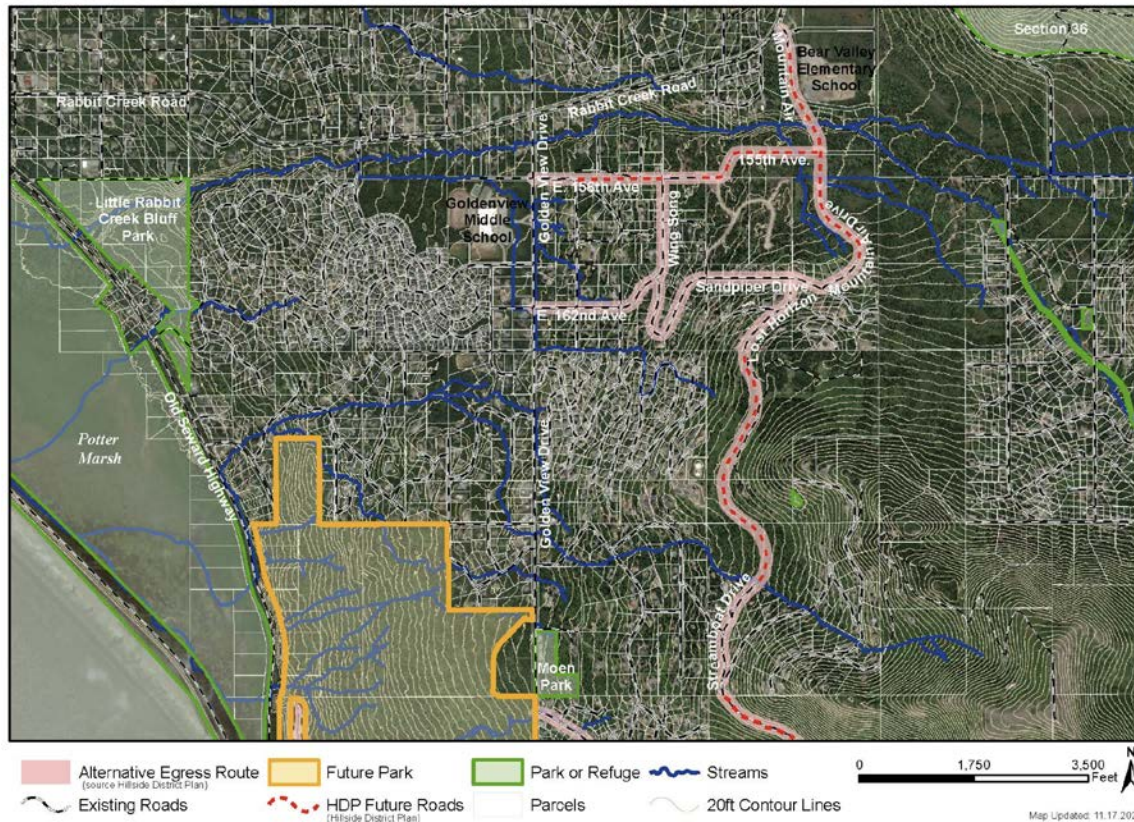


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Map 3. Egress via Bridgeview and Southpark Bluff



Map 4. Proposed egress via E. 156th or 162nd and Mountain Air Drive



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