

August 25, 2016

Battalion Chief Rich Hood,

A-Shift, Battalion 2, A.F.D.

Sir;

In July of this year, the Municipality of Anchorage faced a serious wildfire situation, culminating in the McHugh Creek Fire just over the hill from the Anchorage Bowl. I will state the obvious by adding that everyone in town recognized that particular situation as a very close call indeed, with a very different outcome probable if the wind had shifted.

Last year, A.F.D. and residents of the South Hillside were in a similar situation, and with these facts in mind, it seems likely that dangerous wildfire conditions in this area will be the new reality as climate conditions change.

For some time, I have felt that certain subdivisions in this area are precariously isolated in terms of A.F.D. access in the event of a major wildfire incident. Additionally, residents of areas such as Bear Valley face serious limits in their ability to evacuate quickly, due to the fact that there is only a single way in and out. As you already know, Station 10 A-shift personnel have made a considerable effort to survey this area, both from the Engine, as well as on foot, in an attempt to come up with some proposals to improve road access up here.

On July 27th, Fire Service and Emergency Management personnel conducted a Public meeting at Golden View Middle School, which offered members of the Public the opportunity to meet with Local, State, and Federal agencies that fought the McHugh Creek Fire. During that meeting, both Fire Chief LeBlanc and Mayor Berkowitz expressed an interest in our ideas about road connectivity and evacuation feasibility for this area. This report contains our findings and suggestions.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, as well as for your continuing support as we hiked all these trails and old by-ways over the south Hillside.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joe Albrecht".

Joe Albrecht,

Captain 10 A,

Objective 3.5 *Improve road connectivity for evacuation purposes.*

Objective 3.6 *Promote disaster contingency planning and facility safety among institutions that provide essential services such as food, clothing, shelter, and health care.*

Objective 3.7 *Improve disaster warning systems.*

Objective 3.8 *Promote appropriate hazard mitigation of all public and privately owned property within the Municipality of Anchorage including, but not limited to, residential units, commercial structures, educational institutions, health care facilities, public gathering places, and infrastructure systems.*

Objective 3.9 *Promote mitigation of historic buildings.*

Objective 3.10 *Promote post-disaster mitigation as part of repair and recovery.*

Goal 4: Protection of Public/Critical Facilities: Make MOA-owned facilities as disaster-resistant as feasible.

Objective 4.1 *Encourage a structural review of new facilities.*

Objective 4.2 *Consider known hazards when siting new facilities and systems.*

Objective 4.3 *Perform structural retrofitting of existing structures.*

Objective 4.4 *All public facilities should have a pollution prevention plan.*

Objective 4.5 *Incorporate non-structural mitigation into existing buildings.*

Objective 4.6 *Implement mitigation programs that protect critical Municipal facilities and services and promote reliability of lifeline systems to minimize impacts from hazards, to maintain operations, and to expedite recovery in an emergency.*

Objective 4.7 *Create redundancies for critical networks such as water, sewer, digital data, power, and communications.*

Objective 4.8 *Formalize best practices for protecting systems and networks.*

Goal 5: Support Wildfire Mitigation.

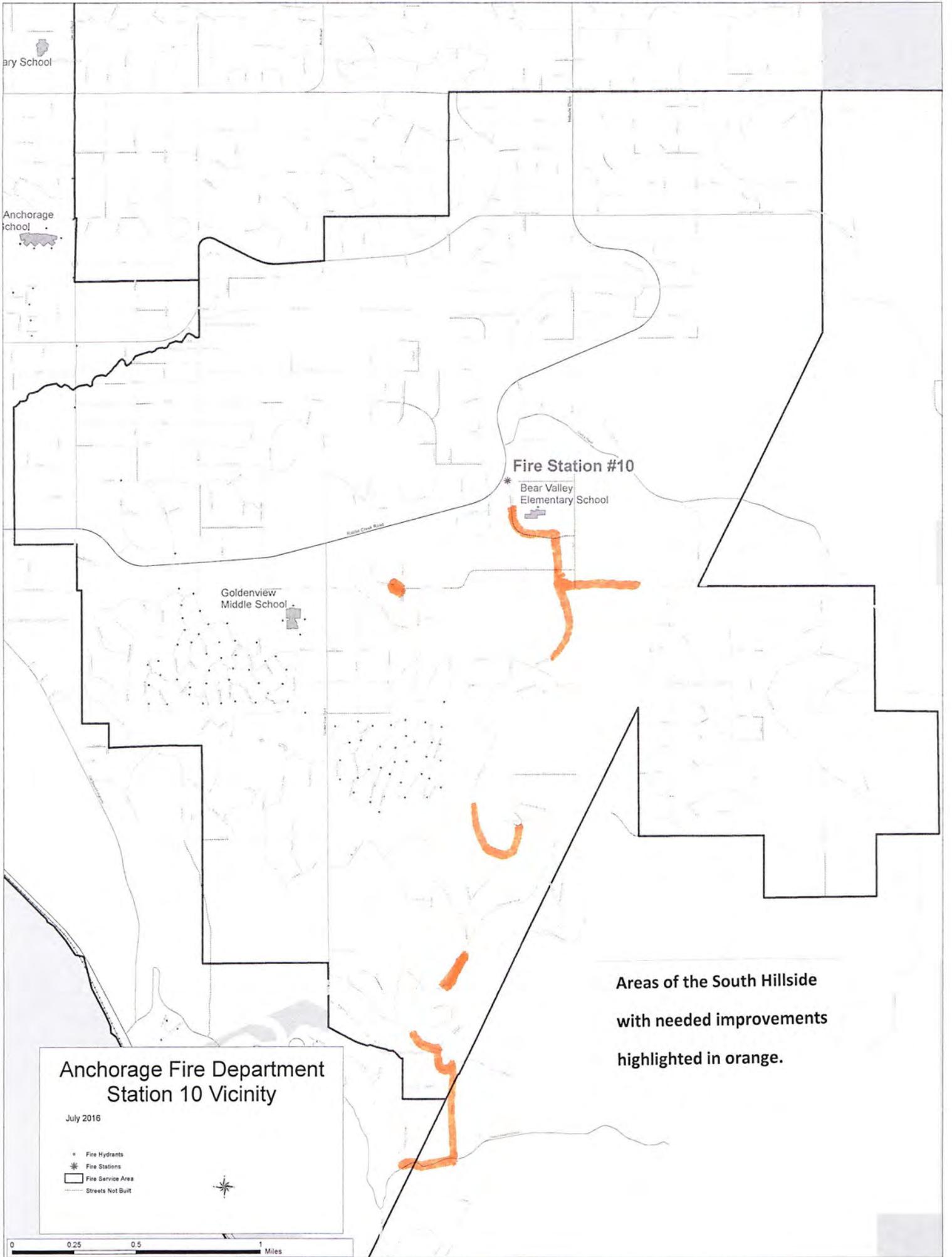
Objective 5.1 *Support the AFD Wildfire Strategic Plan.*

Objective 5.2 *Promote FireWise homes through the concepts in Firewise Alaska; landscaping and vegetation management; structure protection through preparedness; building design, siting, and construction material; and homeowner awareness.*

Objective 5.3 *Promote vegetation management in greenbelts and parks to limit fire spread.*

Objective 5.4 *Maintain the wildfire risk model.*

Objective 5.5 *Maintain and develop additional water resources.*



SOUTH HILLSIDE ROAD CONNECTIVITY REPORT

August 23, 2016

The Problem: Anchorage Fire Department access to, and citizen egress from certain isolated areas of the South Hillside were brought to the fore by the recent McHugh Creek Fire. If not for the fortunate wind direction at the time of this fire, it is more than likely that a serious Urban/Wildland incident would have occurred within the Anchorage Fire Service District. Considering the fuel loads, and the recent, snow-free winters in the Municipality, this scenario becomes more and more probable. In the final analysis, we dodged a bullet this time, and the window allowing for a proactive approach gets smaller with the passing of time.

Although some access issues in this area really have no solution, (Upper DeArmoun Road), there are other neighborhoods which currently have only a single way in and out that could be linked up with minimal difficulty. If connected by road, this would provide residents both an alternate means of evacuation, and faster response times by AFD and other agencies.

I have identified 5 areas of Fire Station 10's area that have the most serious road connectivity problems, but which also have the potential for a good solution at a minimal cost. In company with AFD Forester John See, and other Fire Fighters assigned to our southernmost facility, these areas have been surveyed both by vehicle, and on foot. In some cases, trails or old roads exist, while in others, there are only maps or plats for proposed roads that have never been built. Maps are enclosed to show both, as well as suggested solutions.

The Authority: Anchorage All-Hazard Mitigation Plan adopted by the Assembly June 28th 2011; this is a lengthy document dealing with all of the possible hazards faced by Anchorage, and Objective 3.5 calls specifically for greater road connectivity to deal with the eventuality of a wildfire.

Sections of the South Anchorage Hillside in need of Road Connectivity:

Bear Valley (Map pages 3139 & 3140): This area's only road access is via Clark's Road, off of Rabbit Creek. In many places, it is heavily wooded, and the risk of wildland fires is increased in others by steep terrain. It is prone to powerful wind storms, particularly in the winter months.

No. of structures: 201; source Google Earth, August 2016.

Alternate road access: An old road runs from the west end of Jamie, (currently a gated dead end), to the rear of Bear Valley Elementary School, on Mt. Air Drive. This apparently led originally to the old Clark Homestead, and included two bridges over Little Rabbit Creek, one of which is still in place. Jamie could be extended to connect with Mt. Air Drive, although at least one bridge would have to be built.

Consideration could also be given to an east/west road farther south between Carl and the new Shangri-La East subdivision, but this would be at a higher elevation, and has not been walked by AFD personnel. In addition, a road could be built west from Heights Hill, parallel to Jamie on the north side of the two small creeks, eliminating the need for a bridge, and then linked up with either Mt. Air Drive, or East

155th, both of which are on paper only at present. This may already be Municipal land, Storck Park or Heritage Land Bank; if so, then no property need be purchased.

Area of Sandpiper and Shangri La, (162nd east of Golden View), (Map page 3239) Two new subdivisions have been built during the last five or ten years, Shangri-La, and Shangri-La East. There are a total of 59 lots in these two, and new homes are under construction at this writing. The irony is that these can clearly be seen from the front ramp at Station 10, but the only road access is via 162nd off Golden View. Engine 10 drove this distance under ideal road conditions in mid-August of this year, and found the response time to be 6:50 both times. East of the intersection of Sandpiper and Lost Horizon, (Shangri-La East), is the new section of Mt. Air Drive, which curves northward, and ends in a cul-de-sac just south of the creek, and more or less directly behind the school. The enclosed plat shows this dead end as a “temporary turn-around easement,” although according to local sources, including the Listing Agent for many of the lots in this subdivision, funding did exist to link up the two sections of Mt. Air at the time the plat was approved. Both this Agent, Chris Swires, and sources at B.V.E.S. told me that these funds went elsewhere due to the actions of a State Legislator, and the road was never connected.

If built, I estimate that AFD response times into this new area would be 2 minutes or so. In addition, areas farther west on Sandpiper and down 162nd would be served much more quickly as well. At present, all of the residences accessed from 162nd above Elizabeth, including the two new subdivisions, are looking at a single point of egress, west to Golden View Drive.

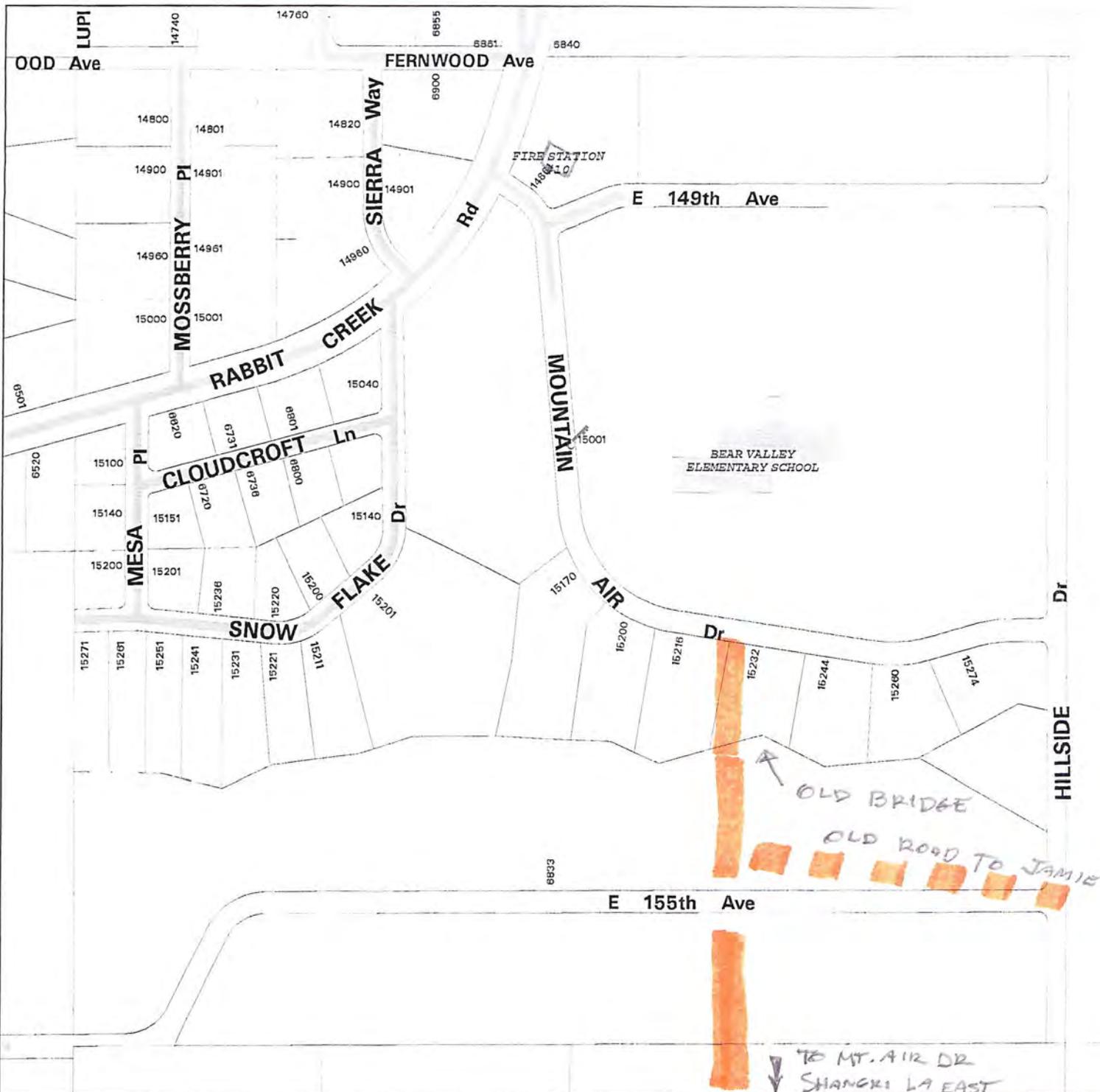
No. of structures: off 162nd: 83

Area of 156th and Wind Song, (Map page 3238): This area lies along a section of Cobblestone Hill, and has several small cul-de-sacs, egress from which is via 162^{ns}, or by 156th, both accessible from Golden View Drive. They do not otherwise connect with each other, although there is a vestigial section of Cobblestone Hill that could be re-opened between the intersection of Wind Song and East 156th, and the intersection of Jadewood Circle and Cobblestone Hill. In August of 2016, Engine 10 personnel walked this area, although we were not able to proceed past the numerous No Trespassing signs on view. The roadbed still exists, and still shows on AFD maps as 156th Ave; the other, still-used section of Cobblestone Hill is clearly visible from an uphill vantage point, and is only a short block away. It would be an easy link-up for alternate egress for the 148 homes in these two areas.

Off 156th: 65

Alternate road access: Link-up of the 2 sections of Mountain Air Drive would be the best solution, as it connects two fairly large developing areas with the local Fire Station, providing much faster AFD response times as well as a second point of egress for these residents. If this proposed road were also linked up with a westward extension from Jamie, (in Bear Valley), then three of these five areas would have dual points of egress.

Additionally, an eastward, uphill extension of East 155th from the area of East 156th and Wind Song, (as depicted on AFD maps) could connect these areas with any extension of Mountain Air Drive that might be built.



Anchorage Bowl

366

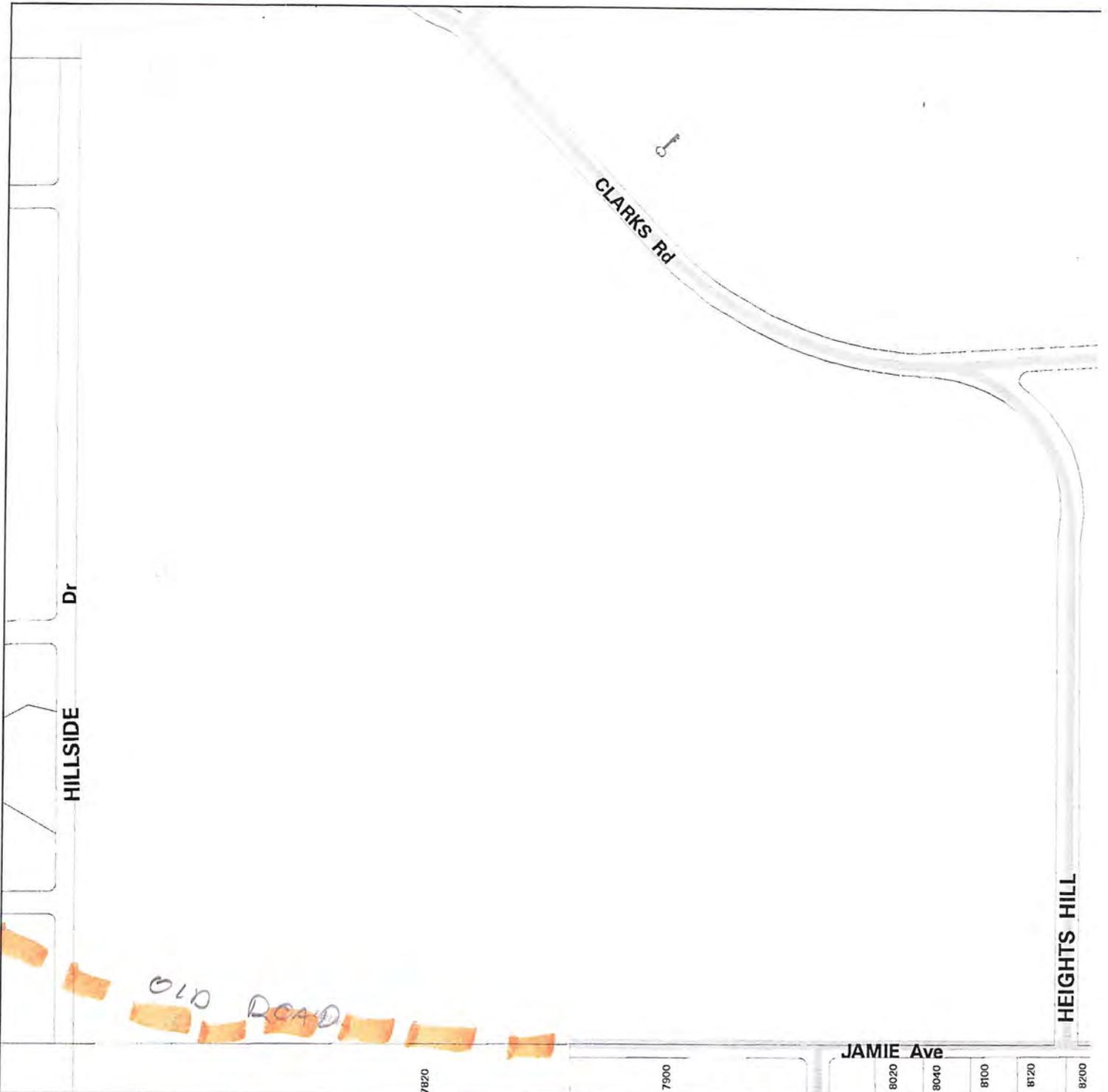
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-  Hydrant
 -  Knox Box
 -  Water Drafting Site
 -  Existing Road
 -  Trail
 -  Municipal parks & open space
 -  Vacant land
- Source: 1998 land use inventory
Planning Department
Municipality of Anchorage

SW3038	SW3039	SW3040
SW3138	SW3139	SW3140
SW3238	SW3239	SW3240



Approx. Scale:
1" = 340'
May 07, 2003



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Anchorage Bowl

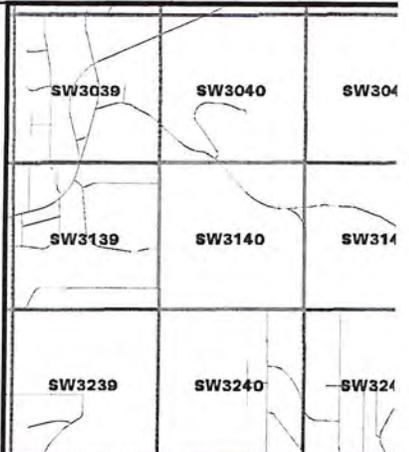
367

-  Hydrant
-  Knox Box
-  Water Drafting Site
-  Existing Road
-  Trail
-  Municipal parks & open space
-  Vacant land

Source: 1998 land use inventory
 Planning Department
 Municipality of Anchorage

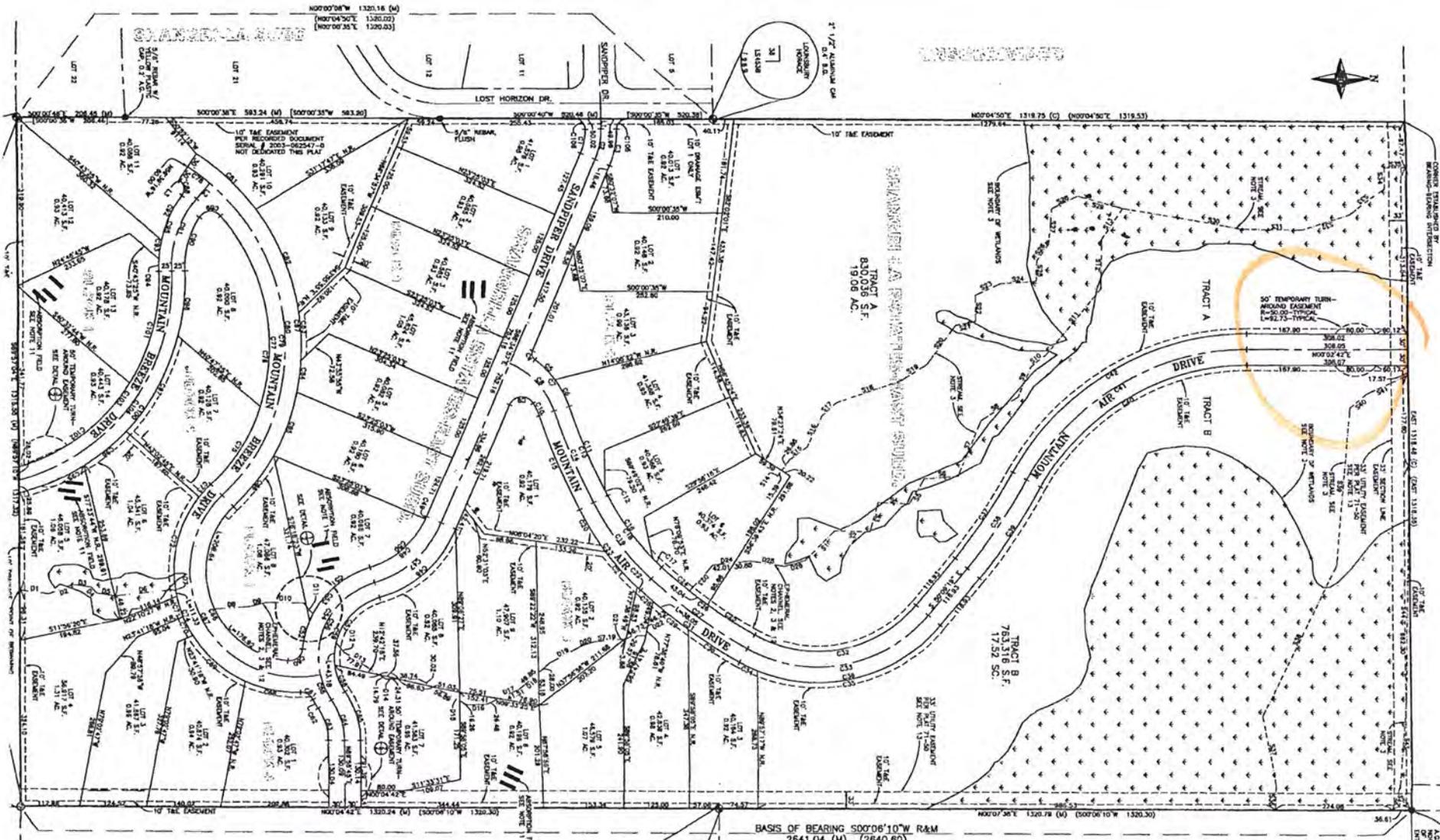


Approx. Scale:
 1" = 340'
 May 07, 2003



ANSW 3140

ANSW 3140



BIRLWOOD SUBDIVISION
TRACT B

BIRLWOOD SUBDIVISION
TRACT A



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800 E. DIAMOND BOULEVARD SUITE 3-560 • ANCHORAGE, AK 99515

A PLAT OF
SHANGHI-LA ESTATES-EAST S
LOTS 1-14, BLOCK 1, LOTS 1-8, BL
BLOCK 3, LOTS 1-8, BLOCK 4 & 7
TRACTS 1 AND 2, A SUBDIVISION OF
CONTAINING 79.84 AC., MORE
LOCATED IN E 1/2, NE 1/4 SECTION 2, T11
ANCHORAGE RECORDING DIS
F.B. 322 pg 22-38 ORD SW3239 MOA C
SCALE 1"=100' DATE 7/8/11 S-11-
CONF FILE NO. 916FPD10 wd. 10916 S-11-

ANCHORAGE RECORDING DISTRICT PLAT # 2011-62



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Anchorage Bowl

- Hydrant
 - Knox Box
 - Water Drafting Site
 - Milepost
 - Existing Road
 - Trail
 - Municipal parks & open space
 - Vacant land
- Source: 2003 & 2004 Land use Inventories
Planning Department
Municipality of Anchorage

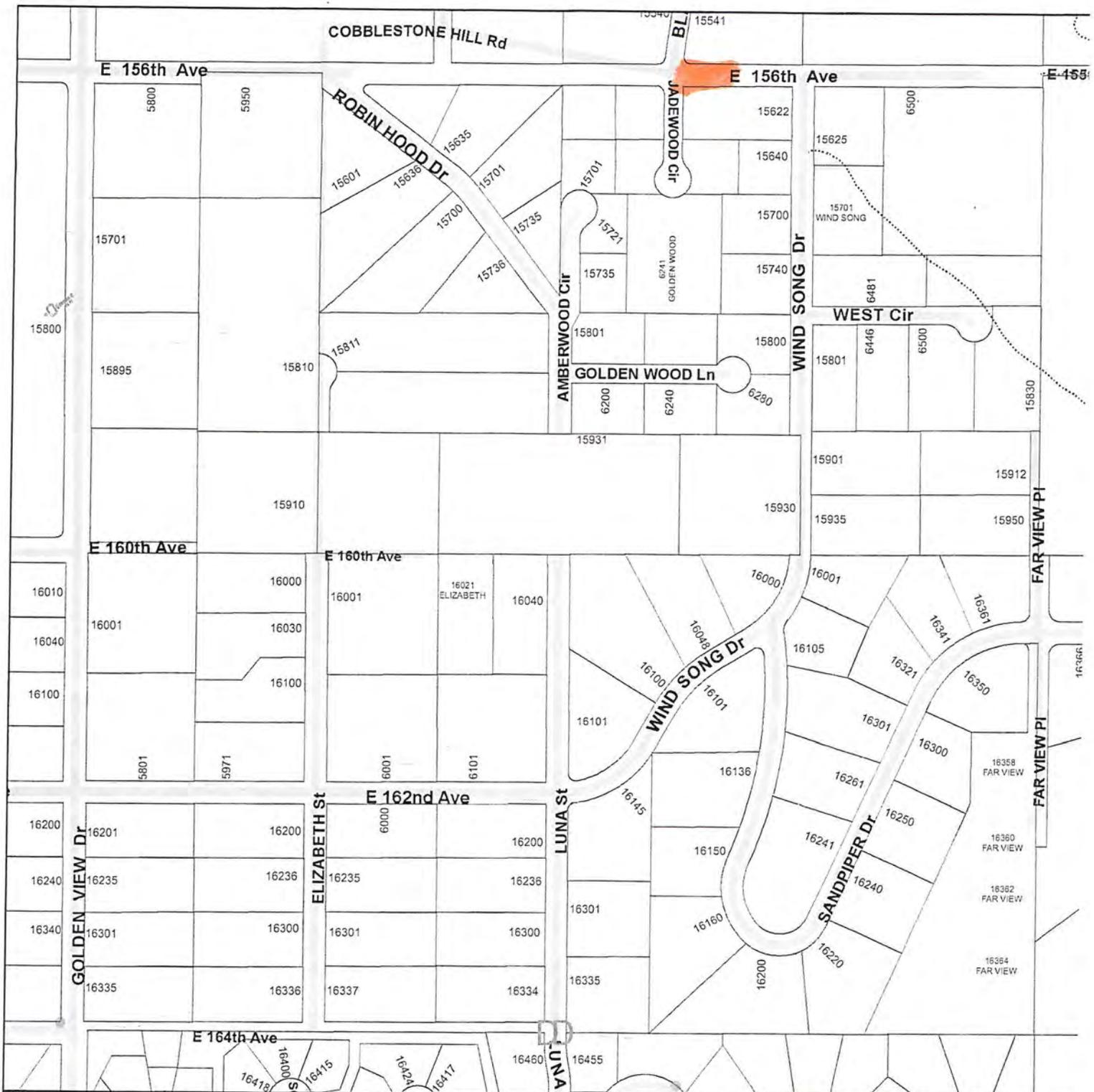
SW3138	SW3139	SW3140
SW3238	SW3239	SW3240
SW3338	SW3339	SW3340



Approx. Scale:
1" = 340'
May 23, 2005

NSW 3239

ANSW 3239



0 200 400 800 Feet

Anchorage Bowl

-  Knox Box
-  Hydrant
-  Water drafting site
-  Road Blockade
-  Milepost
-  Existing road
-  Trail
-  Municipal parks & open space
-  Vacant land

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SW3137	SW3138	SW3139
SW3237	SW3238	SW3239
SW3337	SW3338	SW3339

Area of Steamboat and Rosemont (Map page 3439 & 3538): This offers what is likely the easiest and shortest proposed road connection. Although some of the upper parts of this area are outside the Fire Service District, there are a considerable number of large homes in the area, and the terrain and fuel combination here is alarming. Narrow, winding roads, coupled with 30 and 40 percent gradients covered with 10 foot alders make this spot a fire fighter's nightmare. There is a particularly acute switchback at Steamboat and Mountainside Village, although the road system in this area features several other tight turns and angles. During the summer months, hikers often complicate things for fire apparatus at this spot by parking their vehicles right along the switchback on Steamboat, in order to trespass on the "trail" along Stewart Homestead Road, private property in its entirety.

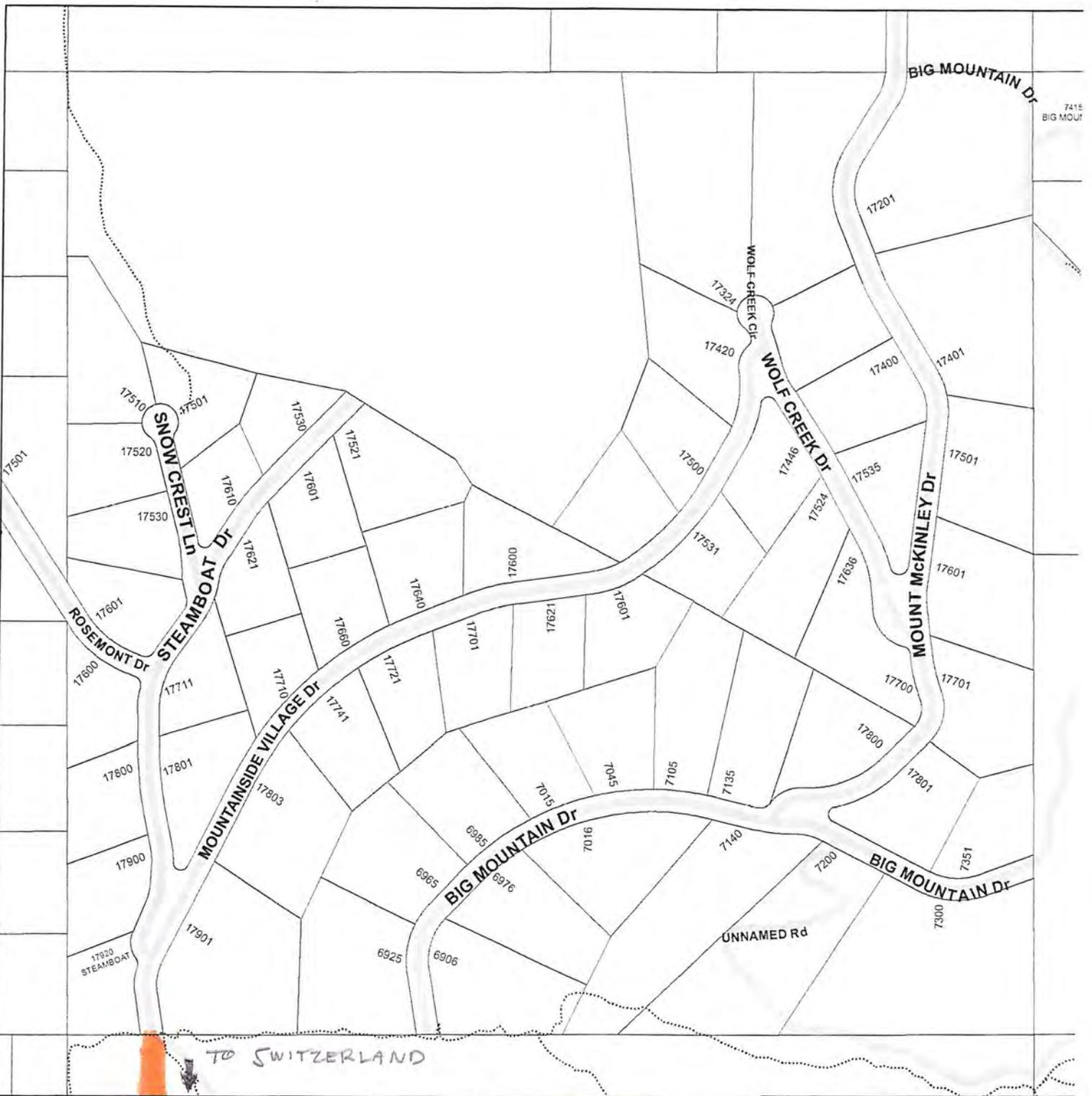
Alternate road access: During the late summer of 2015, Station 10 personnel hiked from the end of Mt. McKinley north to the dead end of Lost Horizon. Lost Horizon is a short street that runs due south a few hundred feet from Sandpiper, and then terminates at an old gate across Cobblestone Hill Road. During this hike, we found two old houses along Cobblestone Hill, one long abandoned, and another farther to the south that appeared to be occupied. This large tract of land is directly uphill (east) from Prominence Point, and showed signs of impending development, such as well sites and perc test pipes. Several utility trails ran through the area, but for the purpose of road access, the important feature was the existence of Cobblestone Hill. Although rough, this is still a viable road, and the (overgrown) farthest south portion of it connects via a steep incline, to Mt. McKinley. The property along and above it, (where all the well and perc sites were) is in foreclosure with First National Bank, according to Ms. Swires. If this land is ever developed, the relevant Municipal agencies should require the developer to put in road access connecting Lost Horizon with Mt. McKinley, either by new survey, or by using existing parts of Cobblestone Hill. If undeveloped, the City could upgrade Cobblestone Hill as it sits, permitting a secondary point of northbound egress for citizens living above Steamboat and Rosemont, as well as a southbound egress for those living off the 162nd street subdivisions. In the undeveloped scenario, AFD-only access gates might be considered.

One final point is that the next area listed is immediately to the south, and a pretty good argument could be made that the connection of these two could be made first. It isn't what could be called the highest priority, but it would likely be the easiest.

No. of Structures: 76

Area of Switzerland and Norway (Map pages 3539 & 3439): In the same way as the others, this area has a single point of access and egress. The only way in or out is via Spain, which roughly parallels Golden View on its east side, north of Romania. However, it also offers the shortest distance in road connectivity. In July of this year, Engine 10 personnel visited the site, and noted that a reasonably healthy person could actually throw a rock from the end of Switzerland to the apex of the Steamboat/Mountainside Village switchback. Since the private property and Stewart Homestead Road, (now blocked by a strong gate), have a for sale sign next to them, it might be an excellent time for the Municipality to purchase an easement to allow for a road between Switzerland and Steamboat. It wouldn't take much, and represents perhaps the lowest-hanging fruit of any of these proposals.

No. of Structures: 46



0 200 400 800 Feet

Anchorage Bowl

-  Knox Box
-  Hydrant
-  Water drafting site
-  Road Blockade
-  Milepost
-  Existing road
-  Trail
-  Municipal parks & open space
-  Vacant land

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SW3338	SW3339	SW3340
SW3438	SW3439	SW3440
SW3538	SW3539	SW3540

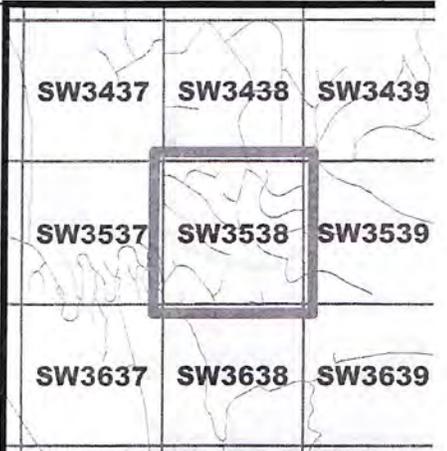


0 200 400 800 Feet

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Anchorage Bowl

-  Knox Box
-  Hydrant
-  FDC
-  Water drafting site
-  Road Blockade
-  Milepost
-  Existing road
-  Trail
-  Municipal parks & open space
-  Vacant land





Anchorage Bowl

- Knox box
- FDC
- Hydrant
- Water drafting site
- Road blockade
- Milepost
- Trail
- Existing Road
- One-way road
- Driveway
- Municipal Parks_Open Space
- Vacant Land

0 200 400 800 Feet

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SW3238	SW3239	SW3240
SW3338	SW3339	SW3340
SW3438	SW3439	SW3440

Potter Creek Canyon problems, re: Romania, Finland, and Potter Heights, (Map pages 3538 &3638)

Potter Creek Canyon runs uphill and generally east from Potter Marsh, all the way up through the intersection of Romania and Portugal Place. The only road access to this very large ravine is via Bulgaria, off of the far south end of Golden View. Numerous homes are, however, built right along the edge on Romania, England, and Greece. The canyon is filled with the usual wildland fuels, and includes more of the very steep terrain features found on the South Hillside. At its far east, (upper), end, the creek is bridged at a sharp switch-back by a simple culvert, but at the lower end, on Potter Valley Road, it is crossed by a substantial concrete bridge. Since these are the only two ways to get over it, it is worth considering an upgrade of the roads from the intersection of Spain and Romania all the way around to where the new pavement is on Potter Valley Road. In August of this year, an AFD Tender drove from Station 10 to Potter Valley Road by means of Golden View, Romania, and Finland, with a timed response of 9:30. A serious upgrade of this route would definitely improve AFD response times, but more importantly, allow quicker citizen evacuation in the event of a wildfire. Here's why:

From the intersection of Romania and Spain, the road decreases in quality almost immediately, going to gravel, and then featuring a crumbling culvert right at a 90-degree-plus switchback, followed by a steep, 180-degree, climbing turn that ends at Finland. South from there, at the intersection of England Avenue and Finland, there is a stream running through the road at certain times of the year. At these times, it's more of a ford than a road, and simply cannot be called an adequate escape route by even the most optimistic of observers. Civilian motorists have commonly become stuck on the Portugal Place curve in the wintertime, and it would not be hard to imagine what would happen if several hundred vehicles attempted to use this route during an evacuation. The Jersey barriers on the downhill side of the Potter Creek culvert on Portugal are quite an improvement over the old set-up, but still, this route is not one our Crews willingly take in the winter, unless there is an actual emergency.

No. of Structures: 101

(This includes the Potter Valley Subdivision, now nearly 30 years old. There are two differences in this area: first, there ARE two alternate ingress/egress routes present but in poor repair, and second, Potter Valley Subdivision has its own water supply, and hydrants are accessible and adequate for the size and type of construction)

Ideas for Solutions: Old trails run through the entirety of the areas discussed, and could potentially turn into access, depending on what the experts conclude. Trails may or may not have easements, but if not, then already-platted roads and utility easements could be used to link up some of these sites. As mentioned above, older, existing roads could be brought back into service, specifically Cobblestone Hill, and the old trail to the Clark Homestead that runs behind Bear Valley Elementary School. There is a very old house back in to the west of Jamie that has signs posted, stating the area to be the Clark Homestead, and with a date of 7/7/1952. While maybe not old enough to qualify as a historic site right now, in the future, designating the area with something like that might provide some sort of funding, or smooth the path of a road-building easement. We thought it was worth mentioning, times being what they are here in Alaska.

The extent of the Anchorage School District real property that B.V.E.S. sits on is not known at this writing. A possible avenue of cooperation with A.S.D. in the future is suggested.

It should be considered that AFD-only gated-access might be a viable political compromise in some of these areas, should citizen opposition arise. Some Hill-siders like things just the way that they are, and that is very well understood. Gated access is found in several places in these areas, most notably at the west end of Jamie, in Bear Valley, and at the south end of Luna, just next to Prominence Pointe. Using the Knox Box Program, AFD units could open the gates as required in the event of a major incident.

Nothing in this report is intended to offer offense to anybody, all of us being the employees of the taxpayers who live out here. That said, I would like to conclude by adding that despite the presence of hundreds of homes in these areas covered in this report, and mindful of all the potential homes yet to come, there is only a single fire hydrant, located at the dead-end of Far View, off of Sandpiper.

Thank you for your attention to these matters,

Respectfully,

Joseph W. Albrecht,

Captain, Station 10,

A.F.D.

Special thanks to: FF Jeff Graham, Eng. Paul Page, Eng. Jae Lee, Forester John See.