



RABBIT CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL (RCCC)
A Forum for Respectful Communication & Community Relations



1057 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 100 / Anchorage, AK 99503

Seeking Our Legislators' Support: Rabbit Creek Community Council Projects

The 2010 [Hillside District Plan](#) (HDP) is the framework for development within the Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) area. RCCC comments to the Planning and Zoning Commission and Assembly typically reference tenets established in the HDP such as neighborhood connectivity, providing trails as neighborhoods are developed, ensuring RCCC drainages are protected, and addressing secondary access as housing and transportation is developed in our area – particularly with regards to concerns about wildfire and other disaster preparedness.

The RCCC's two major committees develop proactive projects and respond to development proposals and other activities in our area, bringing recommendations to the full RCCC for approval and action: **Resilience and Firewise** (Resilience); and **Land Use and Transportation** (LUT). The work you do and your responsibilities as our State Legislators are complimented by the work of these committees to improve community safety, maintain and enhance the wonderful quality of life we enjoy in our area (e.g., roads, trails, subdivision development/maintenance), and enhance economic diversity and thus economic development.

Of particular note are the annual recommendations and priorities the RCCC provides to the Municipality (Muni) regarding the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for Muni Parks and Recreation, State, and Muni projects (RCCC 2023 CIP Survey Response attached). Our top three priorities in each of these categories are listed below, followed by other major activities and issues of our Resilience and LUT committees, several of which emphasize those priorities. We are herein seeking your support in pursuing needed funding and policy implementation for our community projects.

RCCC 2023 Capital Improvement Program – top three Priorities by category (see attached (1) Ranked list with project descriptions as found on Muni website (link below), and (2) RCCC explanatory notes, and more specific rankings within categories of Non-motorized projects (including Parks and Recreation), Muni, and State). These funding priorities are results of a May survey of RCCC members and were provided to the Municipality for their use and posting (<https://www.muni.org/communitycouncilsurveys/homepage/>).

Non-motorized (including Parks and Recreation) Projects:

- 1) Chugach State Park Access
- 2) Identify, Survey, Plat, Signage for Existing but Undeveloped Pedestrian Easements
- 3) Coastal Trail Erosion
- 4) Rabbit Creek Gateway

State Projects:

- 1) Old Seward Highway Upgrade – Rabbit Ck to Potter Valley Dr
- 2) Left Turn Pocket Rabbit Creek Rd to Old Seward Hwy
- 3) S. Potter Marsh Improvements – FUNDED by Muni via ARPA
- 4) Trails – Abbott Rd/Hillside, Rabbit Creek Rd to Old Seward Highway

Municipal Projects:

- 1) Hillside Fire Prevention and Mitigation, Disaster Evacuation Routes – Low Cost Connections
- 2) (tie) Chugach State Park Access Improvements (categorized as P&R by RCCC)
(tie) Golden View Pedestrian/bike Path – Rabbit Ck Road to Romania Dr.
- 3) (tie) Mountain Air Drive Extension/Connection
(tie) Golden View Dr Connection (west) – Romania Dr to Potter Valley Rd

A newly-proposed project mentioned by several RCCC residents is extension of 156th Avenue to respond to increasing population and lack of egress as several new subdivisions are developed.

Resilience and Firewise - the RCCC works to share information and provide resources to ensure neighbors know each other, look out for each other, and maintain our homes so as to protect them and our neighborhoods from wildfires. With effective communications we can all be safe, healthy, and resilient in the face of disasters such as fires, earthquakes, and even pandemics. The committee now includes folks from other Hillside Community Councils and has organized several training events and Firewise Assessments over the last 3 years. This year's Firewise Awareness event will be May 6, likely at Hilltop Ski Area.

See attached list of Resilience Committee goals and critical projects for immediate funding to prevent or reduce the cost of future fires, or clean up after any that do occur.

Land Use and Transportation – works to promote several proactive projects, as well as review and comment on proposed subdivision plats and rezones, other zoning issues, and road and trail developments and improvements. Imminent and future developments anticipated by the HDP and Anchorage 2040 are constrained by existing major intersections, transportation options (including lack of public transportation and pedestrian/bike paths), and legacy roads. Limited and Rural Road Service Areas do not have the capacity to deal with substandard roads; incremental development does not keep up with increased road demands, nor provide the broader and coordinated connectivity needed by our community. We continue to be frustrated when the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT) ignores neighborhood concerns and priorities and refuses to look for flexible solutions (see below).

Many projects we support are not only assets to our RCCC neighborhoods but should be seen and promoted as an investment and asset to our Muni and even State economic and civic future. Diversifying and building our economy means ensuring a healthy, vibrant community to attract and retain employees and their families. Such projects include Chugach State Park Access; Potter Marsh Pullout (south-end

boardwalk, parking, and toilets - recently funded with American Rescue Plan Act funds from the Municipality); and trails – those that connect our schools with new and existing subdivisions, connect our neighborhoods, and provide access to a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities for RCCC neighbors, other Muni residents, and visitors. Passage of the Chugach State Park Access Service Area by Anchorage Voters in the April 4th Muni election can provide a helpful process for Muni bonds to fund Chugach State Park access projects nearly city-wide!

Four specific **proactive projects** prioritized by RCCC are:

Schools on Trails - Bear Valley Elementary School is one of only two schools in the Municipality with zero walkable access to it. RCCC has initiated a Schools on Trails project with a technical assistance grant from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. The project is currently evaluating options and beginning community outreach for a rustic trail to connect Goldenview Middle School with Bear Valley Elementary, Section 36 Park and adjacent neighborhoods via existing right-of-way and pedestrian easements. Numerous social trails already exist in the area.

Old Seward Highway between Rabbit Creek and Potter Valley Roads - RCCC has asked ADOT to lower the speed limit and add signage alerting motorists to wildlife and wildlife watchers here, adjacent to the popular Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge and State Critical Habitat area. Such signs were added in 2021 due to numerous potholes and cracked pavement as ADOT plans a repaving project (now apparently postponed until 2024). ADOT indicates there are no funds for the neighborhood's desired safe walking/bike path for the large numbers of those users along this road.

Bike/pedestrian path along Golden View – Golden View Drive from Rabbit Creek Road south to Romania Drive was recently repaved. RCCC and neighbors had repeatedly requested that this project include a pedestrian/bike path along this road which passes by Golden View Middle School and is relatively flat compared to most roads in our hillside area. Unfortunately, this was not possible with the available funds and federal requirements that such a path be built to the highest standards, including accessibility. There is a tremendous safety issue here with hundreds of school kids unable to easily or safely walk or bike to their school, not to mention that keeping all those cars on the road works against the 2019 Anchorage Climate Action Plan (https://www.muni.org/departments/mayor/aware/resilientanchorage/documents/2019%20anchorage%20climate%20action%20plan_adopted.pdf).

Neighborhood Gateway! -- In response to RCCC's request, the Municipality has asked the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to provide a long-term, no-cost lease for BLM's 1-acre lot at the SE corner of Rabbit Creek Road and Old Seward Highway. Our vision is that this lot would serve as our neighborhood gateway, with a welcoming sign. It could be a potential community gathering spot for a number of neighborhood uses (e.g., community garden, picnics, meeting for bike and running races, etc. We envision neighbors donating their time to engineer, design, and construct the sign.

Other RCCC activities where Legislative knowledge and support are useful include:

Repeated frustration with ADOT as mentioned above, this includes intransigence regarding:

- (1) Highway plans developed years ago when current conditions no longer support them, e.g., planned Scooter Ave underpass of the Seward Highway, neighborhood concerns around DeArmoun Phase II.
- (2) Road and trail standards that are expensive or unnecessary. For example, ADOT standards include pursuit of a road 'design speed' around the speed that 85% of people drive when lower speeds are safer and more realistic, e.g., Old Seward Highway between Rabbit Creek and Potter Valley Roads (see our proactive project there, above). Other standards that work against neighborhood safety and connections are limiting trails development to a 'gold' standard with curbs and cutouts when a simple soft path may be fine, e.g., providing a pedestrian/bike path along Golden View to access Goldenview Middle School. Another frustration arose from the noisy rumble strips installed along Potter Marsh, despite RCCC's efforts to work with ADOT to mitigate this noise. After the rumble strips were installed, RCCC learned that ADOT has used quieter "mumble strips" in the Bird and Indian section of the Seward Highway.
- (3) Voter approved bonds for road connectivity (e.g., Mountain Air Drive). Funding may not be sufficient to incorporate significant concerns both RCCC and Bear Valley CC residents have emphasized to ADOT: e.g., the need to consider additional work at the Mountain Air Drive/Rabbit Creek intersection due to existing traffic and safety issues that will only be exacerbated as the new road provides important access options for existing and new subdivisions to the south; desirability for a pedestrian trail on both sides of the road to increase safety for school children.

How can you help Community Councils engage with ADOT to produce more cost-efficient and responsive solutions to neighborhood needs?

Major land use and transportation planning and requested changes – These include Title 21, Municipality's Long-range Transportation Plan, Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2040, Non-motorized plan, Hillside District Plan, and others.

Capital Improvement Program – As noted above, RCCC provides comments on State of Alaska projects (where most of the funding will be federal); Municipality projects; and Parks and Recreation (and Trails) projects included in the Municipality's annual CIP, focusing on projects in our area and commonly used major transportation corridors. We also recommend important projects not included in the CIP.

Management of Heritage Land Bank lands - In our area HLB manages part of Section 36 Park as well as tracts adjoining Potter Marsh, and in Upper Potter Valley and Bear Valley; RCCC provides comments on the HLB annual work program and 5-year Management Plan.

Golden View and Rabbit Creek intersection redesign - This intersection has safety and traffic issues, particularly during the morning rush hour and when parents are dropping off and picking up their kids from Golden View Middle School.