

Overview of HDP Draft issues affecting Huffman/O'Malley Community Council district and Furrow Creek

Submitted by Katie Nolan, Vice President HOCC

1. Faulty Survey: The HDP was to have been a community-led process, with the Municipality providing support. Instead, the consultant and the Planning Department took over the project from the first, including refusing to allow the community input into the initial household survey. The results of this faulty survey serve as the basis for decisions that harm the community. These issues include: 1. Placing the entire area below Elmore Road to the New Seward frontage road together and calling it "Lower Hillside"; 2. Eliminating the appropriate zoning designation "Suburban" from options, forcing residents to choose between "urban" and "rural" to describe their neighborhood; 3. Disenfranchising owners of large lots by blending responses from condominium projects along the New Seward with those from large lot residents, as high density areas by their very nature contain more available 'votes' than low density areas, although the areas currently zoned high density are only a small portion of the area designated "Lower Hillside"; and 4. Inserting the term "mix of housing types and styles" without explaining that in 'planner-speak' this means "mixed housing densities" instead of individual neighborhoods vs. planned development. As the initial survey was faulty and biased, those results must be excluded from any decision making.

Solution: Remove all suggestions based on the faulty initial household survey.

2. Furrow Creek Drainage: This area, generally bordered by Huffman and O'Malley, below Elmore Road, is appropriately zoned R-6, and can easily be developed at that density. The HOCC strongly desires this zoning left intact. Higher densities are appropriate in areas with public services currently defined in the existing Hillside Water and Wastewater Management Plan. As this portion of Hillside is already overbuilt according to standards set in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan, it is totally unnecessary to add density. In addition, the existing HWWMP and its boundary allows large lots to provide natural treatment of runoff instead of adding further waste effluent to the issues surrounding Cook Inlet, and large lot zoning prevents seasonal flooding. Higher densities destroy natural open space and the unique character of Hillside, and Hillside residents are overwhelming in their desire to keep large lot zoning. Modern technology has solved the problem faced in the few locations where drainage is a potential issue.

Solution: The Furrow Creek Drainage area needs to remain R-6 large lot suburban residential zoning. No downsized zoning anywhere.

3. Area: The HDP PHD calls for the entirety of the Hillside below Elmore Road to be considered “Lower Hillside”. In actuality, the majority of this area is appropriately zoned R-6 low density suburban residential, and is already subdivided to capacity at this zoning. The only areas where high density is appropriate is along the “gray snake” of the existing AWWU services, also called the “Lake Otis Corridor”. Lumping that small area together with the far larger area where onsite services exist is not appropriate. Offering photo and word examples that show high density neighborhoods is not a representation of the majority of this area, and must be corrected. If the area designated “Lower Hillside” is kept intact, it must reflect the actual reality of this area: low density except along the northwestern portions. A far better solution would be to move everything except for the area of public services to the area now called “Middle Hillside”, as the examples offered for this area also describe the majority of the area outside of the northwestern portion. This separation of designation for areas with existing public services is a natural solution.

Solution: move the designation “Lower Hillside” to the existing AWWU service area.

4. Revisions: The Hillside District Plan was to be a secure document to guide us into the future, protecting existing development and uses while establishing sensible guidelines for new development. The Hillside has been working on the Hillside District Plan since 2002, desiring to protect our chosen homes and neighborhoods while encouraging reasonable and responsible development. We expect a permanent document, not a nebulous and fleeting “living” document. Continual urging of “future revisions”, “updates”, “future changes” and “later revisions” are not the stable, secure footing that this document was expected to produce, and offer no guarantees for our future.

Solution: Eliminate each and every encouragement of revisions in the future.