

## Correspondence



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



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

Planning Department  
Municipality of Anchorage  
P.O. Box 196650  
Anchorage, AK 99519

November 9, 2021

Dear Planning Department Staff:

RE: Taras/Tract A River Hills Subdivision

The Rabbit Creek Community Council (RCCC) appreciates the presentation by Marc Eid of Farpoint Land Services, LLC, on behalf of the owners of Tract A River Hills Estates (hereafter referred to as Taras Subdivision) at the October 14<sup>th</sup> RCCC monthly meeting. We understand that an application will soon be made for the proposed plat on this tract.

The RCCC Land Use and Transportation Committee, in conjunction with several area homeowners, developed a number of considerations based on the Preliminary Proposed Plat provided to us. At our monthly meeting, we raised these points with the developer's representative (Mr. Eid). By a vote of 36 yeas, 0 (zero) nays, and 4 abstentions, the RCCC voted to share these considerations with the Municipality's Planning Department now, rather than wait until the formal proposed plat is published and a developer may be less likely to change their plans. We are copying the developer's representative (Mr. Eid) with these comments.

### **Preliminary Considerations Re: Tract A River Hills Estates Proposed Subdivision**

Lot size. RCCC generally favors large lot sizes and opposes down-zoning from existing densities. The Hillside District Plan (HDP) does not support increased density except in certain limited areas of the Lower Hillside. HDP has specific policies and intent language to provide setbacks and lower density in environmentally sensitive areas, such as creeks, recharge areas, and steep slopes. A summary of most-relevant HDP Policies for the SE Hillside Residential Sub-Area includes:

1. Overarching policy: maintain the Hillside's existing low-density, rural residential character. (page 1-21)
2. Policy 1-B (p. 2-9 & 10): "maintain existing residential land use designations and zoning. . . follow new development standards and the built/green infrastructure approach."

Overall density. It cannot be assumed that rezoning to R6 (1-acre) lots fits a neighborhood pattern for higher density. There are some non-conforming R9 (less than 2-acre) lots in this area, but the general average lot size is 2 acres. If the point is to match the density of the surrounding area, the 2-acre average lot size is a valid target for lot size here. A nearby proposed rezone from R9 to R6 (156th and Golden View area) Rexview Terraces Tract B +26 acres was denied by the Planning and Zoning Commission. It was subsequently proposed as Creekview Estates with 6 lots & 1 tract, retaining the R9 zoning, but that plat was denied because of slopes, soils, and drainage constraints. Staff should look at the history of surrounding rezones, including Special Limitations and conditions of approval.

Special limitations. The banks of Little Rabbit Creek are steeply sloped along this tract. Little Rabbit Creek is an important tributary to Potter Marsh, which is the most-visited part of the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge, with tens of thousands of visitors annually. Other nearby rezones have had special limitations attached, including stream setbacks of 85 feet in Canyon View Estates, and 75 feet in Mountain Air Estates Tract #2. For consistency, planning staff should look at the special limitations on the adjoining tract: Mountain Air Estates #2 tract F-1 and G-1.

Hydrology studies needed. Tract B is at the lowest point of Drainage Basin #1010 which is composed of over 69 acres and drains towards Little Rabbit Creek. Significant portions of Spruce Terrace & Mountain Air Estates are within the same basin. We need more hydrological and geological information to ensure that drainage and recharge will not be adversely impacted. The neighbor on the adjoining parcel to the west says that River Hills Tract A is the lowest terrain at the bottom of a sub basin that drains considerable acreage above, up to a standing pond near Shangri La subdivision. There is a potential for shallow water tables, pocket wetlands, and groundwater recharge. Surface water has been observed and documented in areas of the tract under wet conditions. This includes standing water in pools in heavily vegetated areas of three lots (#5, 6, and 7) proposed along the eastern side of this tract (see attached photos taken recently). We know that this recharge, the wetlands and possibly residential wells in this area have varying degrees of interconnection. HDP Map 1.4 "Terrain Complexes for Drainage Planning Site" indicates soils consist primarily of Valley Tills on Tract B. Properties to the east and west are shown as Moraines.

Conservation approach. If higher density is supported by Planning Staff, we request a conservation subdivision type of layout, with clustered building sites to protect the creek corridor and any water recharge areas, possible by a common tract or a greenbelt dedication.

Road costs. The developer's expense for the road is not a valid reason for small lot size. The developer has options for fewer lots and a different type of road, and the road should be coordinated with neighboring developments and in consideration of the tremendous secondary access needs on the Hillside. Those are essential to ensuring area resident safety in times of fire, earthquakes, windstorms, and other emergencies.

Induced traffic. The subdivision as proposed, together with River Hills, may create new traffic on Windsong. Windsong is a one-lane gravel road that cannot safely handle an increase in traffic. Further studies of "Study Area "B" identified in HDP Map 4.1 is warranted to determine what is the best long term solution for the traffic that will be generated with the new and proposed subdivisions in this area. The development of 156th Avenue to the west of this property may be a better long term solution in lieu of Wind Song; but it would need to be coordinated with existing landowners.

Non-motorized connectivity: This subdivision needs to include a north-south pedestrian easement that connects from the 156th Avenue alignment to the new north-south trail spur in the River Hills North subdivision. That spur currently ends at the bank of the creek, but we are not sure of the location because a property owner with two parcels may have asked for a relocation of the north south trail.

This subdivision also needs to construct and post with appropriate signage both the north-south pedestrian trail and the 156th Avenue pedestrian trail. These are key segments of future connectivity via the 156th Avenue corridor to connect Golden View and Bear Valley Schools to neighborhoods and to Section 36 Park. Our Community Council has initiated a "Safe Routes to School" project for this connection.

Ideally, we would like to see the Planning Department sitting down with the various developers proposing subdivisions in this area, concerned neighbors, RCCC, the local road service area, and other Muni departments that should be involved (e.g., Watershed Management, Traffic/Roads, Trails) to determine the best road and trail designs, and the constraints involving water and septic needs so that one subdivision does not negatively impact existing homeowners or preclude other future development. *The Hillside Subarea Transportation Study* (2006 & adopted in the HDP) was the first plan to attempt a coordinated approach. There are too many examples where poor development on the Hillside has resulted in needless recurring road maintenance costs or caused significant costs for the city and homeowners downstream/downhill of such developments (e.g., Prominence Point). Moreover, this may be the fairest approach for determining who pays for what parts of a road.

A collaborative, coordinated approach would follow the strategies outlined in the HDP as follows:

1. Key land use strategy: Develop and utilize a system of 'built/green infrastructure' to encourage more efficient and effective connectivity of stream corridors, roads, trails, and natural drainage systems. Part of this strategy is better up-front identification for these features at the early stages of the subdivision process (page 2-1).
2. Key land use strategy: Use new processes for residential development to provide more flexibility in lot layout, reduce the impacts of anticipated growth, and protect the Hillside's rural character and natural environment; in particular, encourage the increased use of Hillside Conservation Subdivisions (page 2-1).

3. Policy 5A: Maintain and protect environmental quality at three scales: 1) individual lots, using new development standards; 2) subdivisions, using a combination of new development standards and the conservation subdivision approach; and 3) watershed, using the built/green infrastructure approach and other plan strategies (page 2-38).
4. Policy 5B: Use a mapped layer of the Hillside built/green infrastructure to guide the layout of future subdivisions (page 2-42).
5. Recommendations for reserving open space corridors within and between subdivisions. Recommends trail corridors within and between subdivisions. Encourages development to keep natural wildlife corridors and drainage systems intact and functional (pages 2-40 to 2-42).

We look forward to working with you for coordinated, complimentary developments that are sustainable on the Hillside. Thank you for your early consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Michelle Turner, Vice-chair

Attachment

cc: Marc Eid, Farpoint Land Services, LLC: [marc.eid@farpointak.com](mailto:marc.eid@farpointak.com)  
Watershed Management: [BischofbergerKL@muni.org](mailto:BischofbergerKL@muni.org)  
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# PROPOSED TARAS SUBDIVISION

Groundwater Photo Survey  
Location Key

Photographed 11.2.2021









