



**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 are developed and improved in our area – particularly with regards to concerns about wildfire and other disaster preparedness.

RCCC annually provides [recommendations and priorities](#) to the Municipality (Muni) regarding the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for Muni Parks and Recreation, State, and Muni projects. For the last few years, we have also provided CAPSIS proposals for your and the Legislature's consideration which generally reiterate these priorities. Following are the priority projects for our area, combining these two efforts. We seek your support for needed funding and policy implementation to complete these.

**RCCC 2025 Capital Improvement Program and CAPSIS Proposals**

1. Old Seward Highway Upgrade – Rabbit Creek to Potter Valley Road: No shoulder or path exists. HDP Policy 9D is: "Upgrade Old Seward Highway to a multimodal facility while retaining its rural and recreational character." The road needs a full reconstruction, not just repaving as planned for 2025 or 2026. Recognizing lack of funding for such an extensive project, RCCC recommended a CAPSIS proposal: Recreation and Safety Corridor: Old Seward Highway - Rabbit Creek to Potter Valley Road: adjacent to Potter Marsh in the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge. The Legislative appropriation language determines the scope and intent of the project. RCCC wants to emphasize that innovative design is essential for this project. Design is critical to prevent this corridor from becoming a heavily-traveled bypass for the Seward Highway RCCC advocates a design that requires slow speeds and prioritizes local access to, and enjoyment of, Potter Marsh and other conservation lands.

South Anchorage has a potential new recreation and tourism hub, comprising Potter Marsh and the new Watershed Park (300 acres of uplands), together with Chugach State Park headquarters and trailheads (the train, the old station house, and Turnagain Arm Trail. The Safer Seward Highway may provide some funding to improve access to these features.

For initial repaving we recommend lower speed limits and narrower line striping

to improve both motorized and non-motorized safety and protect wildlife in the adjacent State Coastal Wildlife Refuge. To test the concept of a recreation-oriented corridor, we are discussing a 1-year pilot project making the road 1-way south of Tideview with the other lane for non-motorized use, followed by an evaluation. Two traffic lanes could open with traffic controls in an emergency.

We are excited that the Assembly's 2025 Legislative Program for our District includes "Reconstruction of Old Seward Highway between Rabbit Creek Road and Potter Valley Road."

2. Hillside Fire Prevention and Mitigation Disaster Evacuation Routes – Low-Cost Connections: RCCC appreciates past funding that initiated this project in cooperation with Dr. Jen Schmidt of the University of Alaska – Anchorage's Institute of Social and Economic Research. Additional funding is needed to implement further stages of the larger program developed by the expanded Resilience Committee. With Ky's new position in the Legislature, we are confident this project will receive the attention it deserves.
3. Recreational corridors: along Rabbit Creek Road, and from Old Seward to the Potter Creek Trailhead: This could become part of the Alaska Long Trail.
4. Golden View Drive Pedestrian/Bike Path: Golden View is one of the few, fairly flat roads in the Rabbit Creek community making it particularly attractive for biking, walking, and jogging in an area otherwise characterized by steep, narrow roads with limited sight lines. It is also the primary access for a middle school, one of only two parks with playgrounds in our community, and the new Potter Marsh Watershed Park. Youth attending South High and Bear Valley Elementary schools travel this road. Lack of a bike/pedestrian path here is unconscionable.  
  
Our CAPSIS proposal is for a grade separated pedestrian/bike path along 1.83 miles of Golden View from Rabbit Creek south to Romania.
5. Rabbit Creek Road Upgrade: to include a non-motorized, separated path, left turn pocket at Old Seward, and safety/intersection improvements at Golden View and Elmore. This was also one of our CAPSIS proposals.

A new proposed CIP project is 156<sup>th</sup> access in response to the lack of egress as several new subdivisions are being developed here.

Two additional CAPSIS proposals are:

- 1) Anchorage - Hidden Treasures - Stranded Pedestrian Easements: Complete undeveloped pathways on existing unused easements that were platted and reserved but never built.
- 2) Chugach State Park (CSP) Access: Existing CSP parking lots are overflowing. An investment in repairing and expanding access facilities will alleviate damage to CSP resources, improve access, and more.

### Emerging interest in water capacity for Hillside development

Most of the neighborhoods on the Hillside rely on groundwater. Water availability varies greatly: Some residents already struggle with low-flow wells and periodic water depletion. There is no professional analysis of the water capacity across the Hillside, and there is no administrative process to ensure that new development does not suck existing homes dry. DNR supposedly registers water rights, but has stalled on processing new applications and has no monitoring or enforcement mechanisms. Therefore, knowledge of Hillside water capacity is critical to avoid exceeding the capacity. The Anchorage Assembly has passed a series of zoning ordinances that collectively allow three residential units on any lot. This amounts to tripling the potential residential density on the Hillside, despite the Hillside District Plan's recommendation of 1 dwelling per acre in many areas.

In terms of local/state decision making: How can you help lead ADOT to be more efficient and responsive to current neighborhood needs?

### Your legislative knowledge/support could help with our repeated frustration with ADOT:

- (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: ADOT standards include 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. 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., along Golden View to access Goldenview Middle School.
- (3) Mountain Air Drive is a critical federally funded connectivity being jointly built/managed by ADOT and AMATS where funding is insufficient to incorporate significant concerns both RCCC and Bear Valley CC residents have emphasized. These include: additional work at the Mountain Air Drive/Rabbit Creek intersection to address 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; desire for a pedestrian trail on both sides of the road to increase safety for school children.
- (4) Need for a redesign of the Golden View/Rabbit Creek intersection which 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. ADOT has begun initial planning to improve Rabbit Creek Road from the Seward Highway to Golden View Drive in the next several years; we appreciate that this will include a non-motorized pathway. However, ADOT is not addressing this intersection, nor will the project provide a non-motorized path continuing uphill to Bear Valley Elementary.

We greatly appreciate that you both regularly attend RCCC meetings and are thus highly familiar with RCCC's robust deliberative process and our positions on many issues. For your staff who are not so familiar, we have attached a summary of our process and some recent and on-going projects.

## ATTACHMENT

**Resilience and Firewise** – This committee that now reaches beyond RCCC works to share information and provide resources to ensure: neighbors know and look out for each other; we maintain our homes, protecting them and our neighborhoods from wildfires; and we can all be safe, healthy, and resilient in the face of disasters such as fires, earthquakes, and even pandemics. The committee has organized several training events and Firewise Assessments over the last 4 years. Past state funding has been modest but essential as a catalyst for further work. A position has finally been filled to update the Muni's Community Wildfire Protection Plan. This is a prerequisite for accessing millions of dollars of available federal funding.

**Land Use and Transportation** –promotes proactive projects, as well as reviewing and commenting 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. Lack of a Stormwater Utility and water resource data are becoming more problematic with increasing developments. We continue to be frustrated when the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT) ignores current neighborhood interests and refuses to look for flexible solutions (below).

Many projects we support are assets to our RCCC neighborhoods as well as assets 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 CSP Access; Potter Marsh boardwalk, parking, and bathroom enhancements; and trails – those that connect our schools with new and existing subdivisions, connect our neighbors, and provide access to outdoor recreation opportunities for our neighbors, other Muni residents, and visitors. Passage of the CSP Access Service Area provides a helpful process for Muni bonds to fund CSP access projects nearly city-wide!

We also pay attention to management of Heritage Land Bank lands which include several parcels adjacent or near CSP, as well as Section 36\_development. RCCC has drafted comments on the 2025 HLB annual program and 5-year Management Plan.

RCCC is a member of the Safer Seward Highway Stakeholder Working Group where we have provided comments and input as that project is evaluated and designed. We appreciate that project sponsors plan to now implement low-cost safety improvements including signage and rockfall mitigation rather than wait until the full project is approved. However recent doubling of the cost estimate to \$1.4 Billion presents concerns about this project using the vast majority of construction transportation funds at the cost of other projects that could benefit many residents throughout Anchorage, and without guaranteed maintenance funding for the additional highway miles and

safety needs of a greatly expanded roadway.

This year we are raising the issue of moving forward with implementation of a Stormwater Utility to mitigate costs of developing higher density housing while preserving a commitment to green building principles.

In 2024, RCCC spent a lot of energy reviewing and commenting on several Assembly proposals to greatly reduce zoning throughout the Muni. We believe the 2040 Land Use Plan identified areas where density could best be increased along transit corridors, rather than throughout the Muni. We encourage Legislative opportunities to support multi-family developments in those areas through lower cost loans, support for technical programs to increase skilled people in the building trades, and other means.

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

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 (postponed until 2025 or 2026). 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 repaved in the last few years without the pedestrian/bike path we had repeatedly recommended. Available funding and federal requirements that a path be built to the highest standards, including accessibility eliminated this option. There is a tremendous safety issue here with hundreds of school kids unable to easily or safely walk or bike to their school. Keeping all those cars on the road works against the 2019 [Anchorage Climate Action Plan](#).

Neighborhood Gateway! In response to RCCC's request, the Municipality obtained a long-term, no-cost lease for the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's 1-acre lot at the SE corner of Rabbit Creek Road and Old Seward Highway. Our vision is that this lot can be our neighborhood gateway, with a welcoming sign. It could be a potential community gathering spot (e.g., community garden, picnics, meeting for bike and running races, etc.). A neighbor has cut spruce supports for the sign from their homestead property; others are donating engineering and design work.

Schools on Trails – We initiated this project with a technical assistance grant from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. While currently on pause, the proposal is to evaluate options with community outreach for a rustic trail connecting Goldenview Middle School with Bear Valley Elementary (one of only two schools in the Muni with zero walkable access), Section 36 Park and adjacent neighborhoods via existing right-of-way and pedestrian easements. Numerous social trails already exist in the area.

Recent successes:

Final approval, sale documents, and funding secured by the Great Land Trust are resulting in 200 acres of private land joining about 100 acres of Muni open space into the Potter Marsh Watershed Park to be managed by Muni Parks and Recreation. This protects the watershed contributing about 75% of the water that supports the south half of Potter Marsh, a State Critical Habitat Area and part of the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge and important wildlife habitats and movement corridors, along with providing a park in an area of Anchorage where parks are nearly nonexistent.

Moving Bear Valley Elementary School off the school closure list! However there remains a need to ensure adequate funding for all our schools.

Completion of the South Potter Marsh Parking lot with two vault toilets and signage. A short boardwalk will be added later this year. Funding to complete the project came from the RCCC's successful application for a Muni American Recovery Plan Act grant.