

Public Comment from Briana Sullivan, Co-chair of Girdwood Board of Supervisors on behalf of GBOS to HLB Advisory Commission September Meeting

Greetings HLB Commissioners and Everyone,

My name is Briana Sullivan. Today I am speaking as the Co-Chair of GBOS. As previously emphasized, Girdwood is enduring an acute housing crisis. This has squeezed out those who work in the community and either rent here or wish to move from renting to purchase. These very individuals make Girdwood the community it is; they contribute significantly and are essential to the health, safety, character, and sustainable functioning of our community.

For months, our community has been deeply concerned about the proposed development of Holtan Hills. Consequently, we've been laboriously going through our thorough public process in a very inclusive manner, to responsibly act, together, in response to such a vast proposal. This involvement comes from wherever each resident is - longtime locals, anchored family community members with solid employment, and individuals new to Girdwood that barely found housing before housing became so difficult to obtain, that these very locals who were establishing roots, had to leave the valley, taking with them their talents and dreams, and likely their hope of return, while leaving holes in our mud. In return, we are seeing more and more vacation rentals and second home owners and all the side effects of this empty, high-calorie transfer.

Girdwood has been raining with myriad meetings since December of last year. June 2022 featured a GBOS and LUC Town Hall, attended by over 150 people, communicating the clear message that the vast majority of Girdwood residents are not in support of the proposal for Holtan Hills as it currently stood. They had serious concerns about these 4 items:

1. **Process:** MANY were seriously concerned about the process of developing the RFP, the lack of information provided to the community during the negotiation of the development agreement, and the limited degree of public engagement since the proposal award in June 2021. The development agreement itself was only made publicly available May 23, 2022. As I mentioned, we embrace a very attentive public process: We value and expect updates and information, especially when requested and of such significant interest. *HLB, as an entity managing public assets, is required to honor public process and transparency.*

2. lack of **Infrastructure & Impact Study:** The Holtan Hills project will add approximately 30%, 30%! to our residential developed land and ultimately about a 20% increase in housing units. Given the scale of this development, many community members want to see an impact study to understand the anticipated

changes to traffic, utilities, noise, and other environmental factors. Infrastructure includes roads. In other developments of CY, trails are included. Girdwood loves our trails, and this development happens to hug our National Historic Iditarod Trail, which could connect our youth, families, and community to our school and vital services and education. Perhaps including this corridor in the development agreement would glean some connection to our potential links to existing and future recreation through the Girdwood Valley. Funding infrastructure is part of development.

3. Indirect link to Housing: Since this is a land development project, housing will not be produced directly. The resulting housing would be built by third parties, however there is no guarantee on the amount, nature, or timescale for that housing.

4. Housing affordability: During the June 2022 Town Hall, the developer stated the estimated market sales price of the least expensive, entry-level one bedroom apartment would be \$500,000 in current value. This would mean the lowest price entry-level unit is 20% higher than the **average** 2021 home sale price across Anchorage.

Following the June Town Hall, GBOS established an advisory committee, representing a broad spectrum of the community, tasked with working with HLB and the developer, to amend the Development Agreement so it benefits the community. The Holtan Hills Housing Advisory Committee has worked steadfastly, determined to represent the needs of Girdwood as a whole and make realistic suggestions and requirements of the land owner and the developer. In their intense meeting schedule, they thoughtfully, collectively arrived with Goals and Recommendations, approved by GBOS Sept 7 with a final version of this letter approved Sept 14, and emailed to all of the board members of HLB. This letter presented 8 Recommended Revisions to the Development Agreement, and the Co-Chairs of the committee just had a meeting with CY and HLB Tuesday, Sept 20. GBOS supports these 8 Recommendations to the Development Agreement, and looks forward to additional meetings with CY and HLB. The 8 Recommendations include a deadline by HLB for construction of housing; the whole point of RFP is to produce housing and there's no guarantee it will. Another is deed restriction in 3 suggested ways: cash (to help set up a housing authority or similar) land, and deed restriction, through a portion of housing limited to owner occupancy or long-term rental, which is basically primary residence. This provides foothold and housing for community, because restriction is built into the original deed and conceptually, HLB would buy the deed restriction of the property. This doesn't affect economics of the

development. It simply means HLB or Govt entity buys an interest in development in order to reserve it for community housing.

GBOS does not support the Development Agreement as written. Therefore, we would not support the approval of this disposal in agenda item V.a. as it reads the Development Agreement from April 29.

Finally, GBOS stands firm that it remains unfathomable to see how any responsible body could support such a major development in Girdwood without any mechanism to address the most serious of our housing needs.