

# Municipality of Anchorage



*P.O. Box 390  
Girdwood, Alaska 99587  
<http://www.muni.org/gbos>*

*David Bronson, Mayor*

*GIRDWOOD VALLEY SERVICE AREA BOARD OF SUPERVISORS*

*Mike Edgington & Briana Sullivan, Co-Chairs  
Jennifer Wingard, Amanda Sassi, Guy Wade*

June 22, 2022

Community Development Director Adam Trombley:

[Adam.Trombley@anchorageak.gov](mailto:Adam.Trombley@anchorageak.gov)

Dear Director Trombley,

Thank you for your attendance and contributions to the June 14th joint Girdwood Board of Supervisors/Land Use Committee (GBOS/LUC) Town Hall meeting regarding Holtan Hills.

The meeting minutes are available at:

<https://www.muni.org/Departments/operations/streets/Service/GBOS/GBOS%20LUC%20Town%20Hall%20June%2014%202022%20minutes%20final.pdf>

A recording of the full meeting has been published on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/t-cWGfIvVI>

The context for the Holtan Hills project is that Girdwood has an acute housing crisis.

There is high demand from non-residents to purchase property in Girdwood, and a very limited inventory. House prices have increased dramatically. Consequently, and inevitably, 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 contribute significantly and are essential to the healthy, sustainable functioning of our community. A paucity of workforce housing is the primary factor limiting the operation, stability, and certainty of local businesses and service providers.

At the June 14th Town Hall the overriding sense was extraordinarily clear that the community of Girdwood has serious concerns with the Holtan Hills development as currently proposed. These concerns broadly fall into four categories:

- **Process** Several speakers expressed concerns 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 on May 23, 2022. Girdwood embraces a very attentive public process: Our community values and expects updates and information, especially when requested and of significant interest. Such data directly affects current and future planning for infrastructure, vital services, residents, and visitors to our town. HLB, as an entity managing public assets, is required to honor public process and transparency. The RFP taking place behind closed

doors lowered the trust in the project from the start by giving the impression that public input would be ignored.

- **Infrastructure & impact study** The Holtan Hills project will add approximately 30% to our residential developed land and ultimately about a 20% increase in housing units. Given the scale of this development, many in the community want to see an impact study to understand the anticipated changes to traffic, utilities, noise, and other environmental factors.
- **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. The developer has explained that HOAs and the requirements of conventional financing could guide the eventual housing, yet this depends on multiple unknown factors which may not materialize. This lack of clarity does not earn community support, rather, increased uncertainty.
- **Housing affordability** During the June 14th 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 that the lowest price entry-level unit is 20% higher than the *average* 2021 home sale price across Anchorage.

While the Holtan Hills project may provide additional housing stock (although that is dependent on future actions from third parties) the project does not address our housing affordability crisis. The creation of a large number of second homes, investment properties, or short-term rental businesses does nothing to alleviate the economic and societal problems that our community is facing, and instead exacerbates the widespread stress on Girdwood's housing, vital services, commerce, labor, and economic stability.

Other resort communities use public land, partnerships, and related policies to provide workforce housing at affordable rates. All developable public lands in Girdwood are held by HLB, pressing our community from all sides. Consequently, we urge HLB to use their ownership of those lands to address the desperate need for workforce housing. GBOS is in the process of forming a Holtan Hills Advisory Committee, and we hope HLB can work together with GBOS and the Advisory Committee to amend the Development Agreement so it benefits the community.

While GBOS has yet to vote regarding support of the Holtan Hills project, it remains difficult 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.

Regards,



Briana Sullivan  
Co-Chairs, Girdwood Board of Supervisors



Mike Edgington

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