



Meeting Minutes Draft

Date: October 6, 2020—6:00 – 7:30pm

Location: Via Zoom

Project: Girdwood Trails Plan Subcommittee Meeting

Girdwood Trails Plan Subcommittee Voting members are defined as Girdwood residents or property owners age 18 years or older who have been appointed by the Girdwood Trails Committee to be a member of this subcommittee.

The Girdwood Board of Supervisors, its committees, and subcommittees are subject to the Alaska Open Meetings Act as found in Alaska Statute 44.62.310 and Anchorage Municipal Code 1.25 - Public Meetings.

Attendance

Holly Spoth-Torres (GTP Contractor), Leah Buron (Huddle AK),

Committee Members: Ron Tenny, Deb Essex, Brenden Raymond-Yakoubian, Paul Crews, Nick Georgelos, Carolyn Brodin, Jonathon Lee, Paul Crews

Not present: Craig Schubert, Brian Burnett, Eileen Halverson

Municipal Staff Members: Kyle Kelley (MOA), Shelley Rowton (MOA HLB)

Members of the Public: Jessica Szelag, Krystal Hoke, Eryn Boone, Kalie Harrison, Mariyam Medovaya, Mike Edgington, Barbara Crews, Kalie Harrison, Christina Cope Hendrickson, Brianna Sullivan, Julie Raymond-Yakoubian

Roll Call

Call to Order

R. Tenny calls meeting to order at 6:02pm

H. Spoth-Torres (HST) gives reminder of procedure and asks attendees to keep discussion to subcommittee members until the end of the meeting, which will then be opened up for questions including non-committee participants. HST also, states that the chat will be available, but will not be included in the formal meeting minutes for public record.

R. Tenny calls for a motion to approve the October agenda

C. Brodin made a motion

D. Essex seconded

The motion passed

R. Tenny calls for motion to approve September minutes

P. Crews makes motion to approve and adopt

N. Georgelos seconded
The motion passed

R. Tenny calls for a motion to approve workshop meeting minutes. He also stated he would abstain from the vote due to missing the workshop.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian moves to postpone vote on workshop minutes until the next meeting. He did not think all the maps were included in the minutes and asked for clarification.

HST said that D. Essex's maps were a screenshot and that she would double check to make sure all maps were included.

D. Essex says she will send HST map to be included in the minutes.

HST states that approving of workshop minutes will be moved to next meeting and asks for procedural clarification for postponing workshop minutes to next agenda.

K. Kelley responds that no action is needed since Eileen is not present the committee does not have quorum.

R. Tenny asks B. Raymond-Yakoubian to state his points of clarification so they can go on record.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian says he will send them to Holly to be included in the minutes for the sake of efficiency.

HST states the workshop minutes will be moved to next month's agenda.

Old Business

R. Tenny calls for workshop debrief

HST gives workshop debrief, recapping the 90-minute visioning exercise and values of trails system and mapping exercise. She explains how the values from those exercises were categorized and that these values will be encompassed by the trails plan. HST opens-up the floor for comments beginning with P. Crews.

P. Crews liked the values chart and summarizes the narrative he developed from those values. He explains he tried to represent the 80+ values into one sentence. He welcomes feedback.

HST will share narrative with the group.

HST asks for any additional comments on the workshop.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian says the workshop was useful and it was good to hear others mapping thoughts of how they might tie all the information together as the effort moves forward.

P. Crews asks for clarification on B. Raymond-Yakoubian's comment.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian clarifies his statement that since there were a few members who didn't attend the workshop he would like to hear their mapping thoughts as well. He also is looking forward to tying all of the vision and values exercise information together for the public meeting, which will take place later in the agenda.

P. Crews stated the mapping exercise generated more thought from him and from that he created another map rendition and was curious if other had as well and that he would be interested in seeing them or sharing his.

HST states that the initial phase of thinking through the mapping exercises is over and that the group needs to start moving the process to the broader community in order to start a draft plan.

R. Tenny states he traveled in the lower 48 and that trails have been fundamental during Covid-19 epidemic. He also observed the trails activity diversity and feels that the direction the sub-committee is headed is a good start to incorporate that kind of trails diversity.

P. Crews supports moving ahead

HST clarifies she is not trying to limit participation, but rather ensure that the plan moves forward because she feels Girdwood are ready to have a trails plan completed.

K. Kelley echoes HST sentiment on scope, budget and timeline and thanks sub-committee for coming prepared to the last meeting with their mapping material. He felt the process went smoothly and was able to accomplish a lot within the allotted timeframe.

HST also commends the group on their efforts and the results.

HST gives status update on where they are in the process and where they are going. HST talks group through levels of completion in the areas of A. Project Visioning, B. Mapping, and C. Plans, Concept Development, and Estimates.

Project Visioning-Methodology is completed. Existing conditions assessment is in progress. Stakeholder meetings are complete. Workshops are complete. Visioning statement is ongoing, HST will draft a statement and that will be available as part of the public meeting. A final visioning statement will be drafted once public comment is received.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian asks for more information on demand analysis as well as a clarification as to what the trails professionals are doing.

HST explains that the demand analysis will be qualitative, it will be based on what people are saying they want. HST says that the trails professionals, Interior Trails, are providing a third-party assessment of the existing conditions.

Jonathan Lee joins meeting at 6:28pm

HST asks for any other questions.

Mapping-HST gives progress update on the status of mapping. Stakeholder interviews to determine gaps is complete. HST explains how she will coordinate with the Forest Service once they submit a first draft of the final plan.

HST asks for any final questions on mapping.

Plans, Concept Development, and Estimates-HST states they have started work, but have lots of work to do. She states sub-committee will have annotated outline before they see the final plan. Dates still need to be determined, but there will be two public meetings. One in November/December and one in January/February. HST says January/February end date is possible, but it will be dependent on how public meetings unfold. HST gives a summary on project status and asks for any questions. She asks Kyle for input.

K. Kelley says he likes the project breakdown and how scope of work is laid out. He asks sub-committee members to express any questions or concerns about the pace/progress as effort moves along, but is hoping that the pace keeps moving along.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian would like to see scope added to GTS page

K. Kelley asks if he would like to see original scope

B. Raymond-Yakoubian says yes to seeing the original scope.

K. Kelley will include the scope on the webpage where you find links for meetings.

HST closes discusses and asks to move on to New Business.

New Business

R. Tenny states there are two vacant seats and asks if those are to be taken care of at this meeting or the trails meeting.

HST defers lead to K. Kelley

K. Kelley summarizes the need for two new seats with the vacancies of C. Schubert and B. Burnett who have not appeared at meetings. There is community interest in the vacant seats. Clarifies that the sub-committee will talk about the vacancies, but that the action to fill the seats will be done at the Girdwood Trails Committee meeting. He asks C. Brodin to speak to potential new member.

C. Brodin says that J. Szelag has expressed interest in filling one of the vacant seats and she supports J. Szelag and feels she would be a good candidate.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian suggests, in addition to J. Szelag, that they extend the offer to C. Cope Hendrickson. He feels she's been integral to the scope and that she would be a good fit.

K. Kelley says he will reach out to C. Cope Hendrickson and see if she wants to attend the regular meeting.

HST asks K. Kelley if procedurally they will take this up at the Trails Committee meeting and then if approved new members will be able to participate immediately.

K. Kelley responds yes, unless Trails Committee states otherwise.

C. Brodin agrees.

R. Tenny agrees J. Szelag would be a great addition.

J. Szelag says thank you to the group. She is excited to be involved and is also looking to coordinate work being done with the Area Plan. She also agrees C. Cope Hendrickson would be a good addition.

HST moves discussion to picking a date for the first public meeting. HST states the Imagine Girdwood group is having a meeting on Tuesday November 10th. She feels it will not be problematic to host the public meeting in the same month as the Imagine Girdwood meeting. HST offers potential dates of Thur. Nov. 18th or the week of November 30th, the week of December 7th, or the week of December 14th and asks for discussion.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian observes as a group they will have one or two meetings to prepare and asks HST how much time she thinks she will need to prepare.

HST says she won't need a ton of sub-committee participation to get ready for the public meeting in that she will be using much of the content already generated by the sub-committee. She feels she can be ready as soon as the 19th of November.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian says he would like to see what they are going live to the public with.

P. Crews states if you need more time to prepare, suggest maybe a packet could go out to the public ahead of time so that the public is more prepared when they attend the meeting.

N. Georgelos asks if there is enough time in this meeting to determine content for public meeting.

HST says there is. HST summarizes the format/content of the public meeting. It will be a 90-minute meeting with a context presentation of existing trails, she will summarize stakeholder views followed by a values discussion and a draft vision statement and an ask for community input. There will be a poll in zoom to allow response to questions and an online mapping exercise (ESRI format) that will allow attendees to leave feedback. There will be a two week window for polling online.

C. Cope Hendrickson joins the meeting at 6:49pm

HST tells C. Cope Hendrickson she was nominated for the sub-committee. She explains that the Trails Committee will make the official approval. HST recaps procedure discussion about holding non-committee questions until the end of the meeting.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian states that he is strongly opposed to polling. He feels it is a rabbit-hole. He feels we are not trying to gather statistical data, rather we are looking for feedback. He would like to see cleaned up materials (i.e. vision, goals, mapping, etc.) beforehand.

HST notes that the next sub-committee meeting is on election night.

K. Kelley says they will be addressing that and likely it will change.

HST thanks B. Raymond-Yakoubian for comments and asks if anyone else has any further comments.

R. Tenny disagrees that polling is statistical. He says he is missing the reference to calling polling a “rabbit hole”.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian clarifies his statement that the polling will not accurately reflect the community. He feels that qualitative data from feedback will be more useful and that numbers can create misconceptions.

R. Tenny states they need a method for collecting comments whether that is polling or not. He wants to make sure they get consensus from the community and says that is why they have HST.

J. Lee agrees with R. Tenny that they need a method to collect feedback, but he agrees that they should avoid the type of polling that gives the impression of presenting scientific data. He doesn't want to give the illusion of well analyzed scientific data, it's just feedback.

C. Brodin asks for clarification on the process of the public meeting. Will there be maps from the sub-committee meetings that the public will be able to respond to or will they have blank maps to generate their own ideas?

HST this group is ready to move the process forward, but she feels they should give the public a blank map so that they can generate their own ideas. Some of the existing conditions discussions can be pulled into the map, but it is preferred to hold back on larger future concepts.

K. Kelley suggests that at the next meeting they hash out and agree upon tasks list with sub-committee. Suggests a later meeting date (end of Nov./early Dec.) to give adequate time to prepare.

HST says she is thinking on the perception of numbers from B. Raymond-Yakoubian's earlier comment, and she agrees. However, she feels due to a high barrier with participation there needs to be a “fun” way to engage the public. States if polling is not the preferred method that's fine, but there needs to be an engaging alternative. She appeals to the group to think on this.

N. Georgelos suggests a combination of the collective comments. The sub-committee should think on things they want to see in the public meeting. There is then a meeting in early November solely to discuss the content/format of the public meeting and then have the public meeting before the next sub-committee meeting in December where they can debrief the public meeting. Recap-late November public meeting with sub-committee meetings on either side of the public meeting.

HST will wait for results from tonight's Trail Committee meeting to see when the November meeting will be rescheduled for. HST reiterates the earliest she can mobilize is November the 18th.

C. Brodin agrees with Nick's timeline and asks for clarification because Holly mentioned November 18th and the 19th as possible meeting dates.

HST verifies **November 19th**.

B. Raymond-Yakoubian are there other platforms that the group can consider.

HST says she has explored other public engagement platforms. She feels the most efficient use of the project's time and budget is to use a free platform or something that would be free that can be used in conjunction with the Zoom platform.

N. Georgelos suggest saving discussion on the content of the public meeting for the next sub-committee meeting in order to allow more time for discussion at the end.

HST agrees and wraps up conversation emphasizing that they should try and use resources already available through either Huddle or the Municipality. She would like to keep things inexpensive and user friendly and feels K. Kelley agrees.

R. Tenny suggests discussion be opened up to public comment, gives lead to HST.

Discussion on how to “raise hands”

Barbara Crews sent HST a values statement from the Girdwood Trails management plan and is still trying to put the full management plan into Word. So, some of the new content from last winter is still not online for the public to see. Also, how do they want to merge the values statement from the management plan and the values statement from the trail's masterplan? She feels it is silly to have to separate statements. She feels the management plan will need to be revised and would like to get thoughts from HST on the future of those two plans.

HST doesn't intend to start from scratch with the trails plans. She intends to use the management plan as a guide and will incorporate relevant parts into the trails plan. The materials need to be better organized.

J. Szelag would like to know the nature of the cost estimate and if it will be comprehensive enough to be a resource as funding becomes available. She feels ballpark numbers at the very least would be very helpful.

HST does not anticipate a detailed cost estimate, it will most likely be more concept level.

J. Szelag states that a lot of the impetus for doing the trails master plan is to have nearly "shovel ready" projects as funding becomes available and wants to make sure that the cost estimate will be detailed enough to be able to aid in implementing the master plan ideas when funding for those projects is available.

HST will make the cost estimate useful.

HST asks for any other public comments. She states she is happy to see so much participation in the meeting.

K. Kelley says homework for sub-committee members is to think on:

-what would you like to see in the first public meeting and ideas on how to make it fun and interactive for participants.

-think on a date that will work for the public meeting.

R. Tenny asks for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

J. Lee moves to adjourn the meeting.

D. Essex seconded the motion

The meeting adjourned at 7:11pm

Attachments to these minutes that will be included in the GTP comment record include:

- Comments on GTP Values from Paul Crews
- Additional Comments from Julie Raymond-Yakoubian

Notes: Sept 17, 2020 Trails Sub- committee meeting
Paul Crews 10/04/20

I looked at the colorful Values Chart and wrote my thoughts a narrative summary:

.....
'A narrative summary of the GTP values draft chart 9/17'

We wish to continue Girdwood's Community **IDENTITY** through an effort to utilize our natural spaces and existing and planned future trails.

We wish that our community members and guests may **EXPERIENCE** fun, adventurous and educational challenges in a place that encourages quiet, solitude, and contemplation within the intimacy of nature.

We wish to provide a **variety** of trails that allow **DIVERSITY** of uses and the **INCLUSIVITY** of all user groups. We wish to provide places to recreate for citizens of any physical or emotional means. Girdwood can have something for everyone.

We wish to encourage our community members and guests to **EXPLORE** and **LEARN** using our natural spaces as a classroom to discover the mystery and magic of the local **NATURAL WORLD** that can feel like wilderness while presenting a natural environment of functioning ecosystems of plant and animal life.

We encourage good **HEALTH** and **WELL BEING** within our community by providing opportunities for outdoor exercise and activity for physical

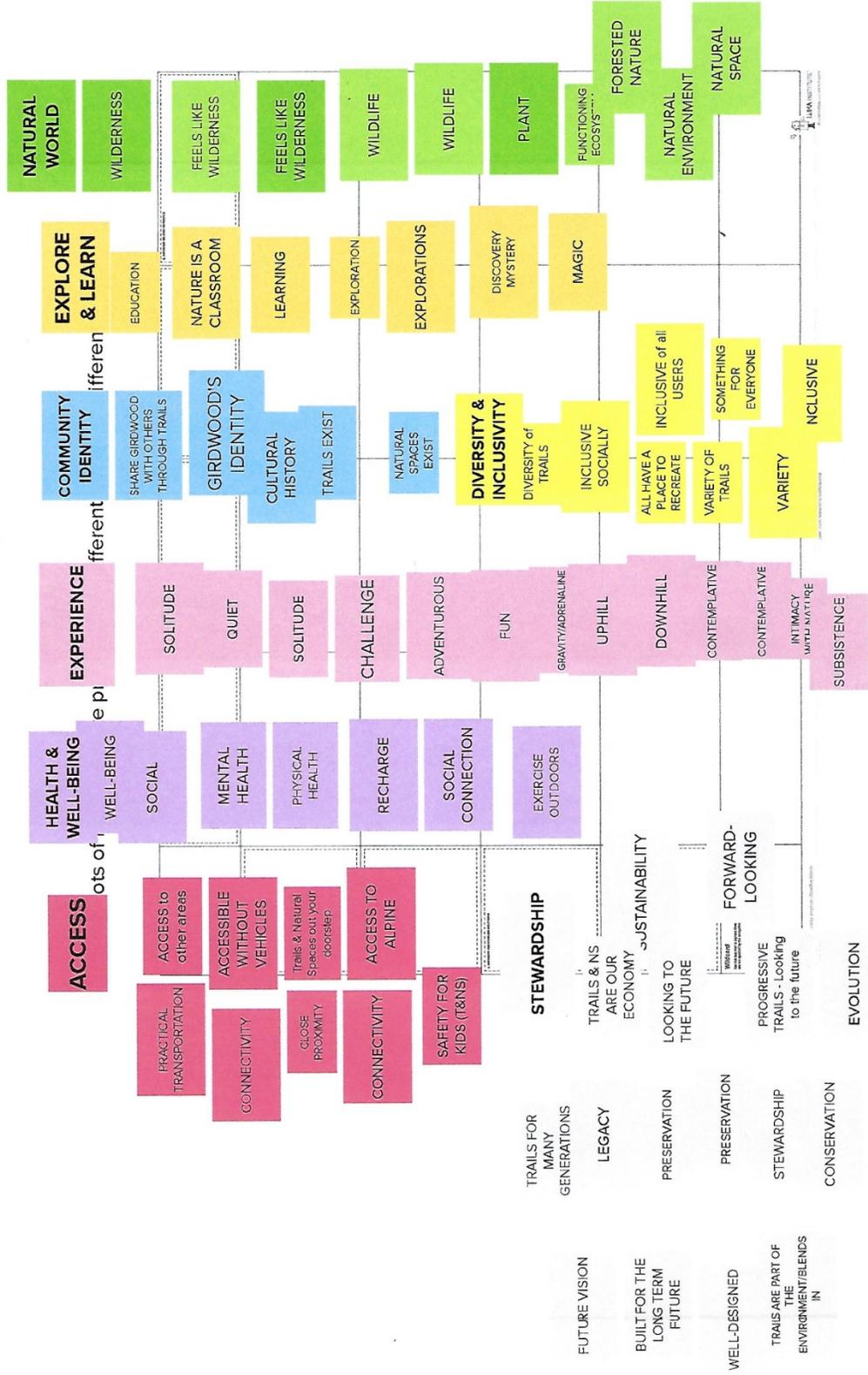
health, and also for the social connections that benefit our mental health and social cohesion.

We wish to **ACCESS** our community and its surrounding natural spaces through a network of trails that will safely connect us to alpine areas or trails or natural spaces that are outside our doorsteps and do not require a car for access.

We wish to provide good **STEWARDSHIP** by accommodating trails and open spaces that are well planned, designed and constructed for the long-term future. Our future vision is to leave a legacy of trails and open spaces for many generations while recognizing that trails should become a part of and blend into the environment. We wish to provide trails that can accommodate progressive increases of use as our community evolves but at the same time can preserve and conserve our natural environment.

GTP Values (draft)

Completed as an exercise during the 9/17 2020 workshop



Other thoughts about our conversations 9/17

I appreciated many of Eileens's comments about: what is the status of social trails Should they be listed a map? Parking is a problem that needs to be addressed. I think she is correct when she said that connecting trails that have different use can cause conflicts. For definition of terms, I like her thoughts that biking on a paved or single track is variety. Diversity is among uses and variety is within a single use.

I also appreciated Nicks's comments that the trails plan should be looking towards the future regarding trail users and planning for accommodating them now.

I think Brendon's description of wild space "lands for which it is desired that they remain entirely or predominately in their natural state" is useful for our planning. "predominately" is a key word in that statement. Well planned, designed and constructed trails can leave the forest in a "predominately natural state".

When I look at the Girdwood map I notice that on the east side of the river most of the dry land has been sub-divided and that little dry land that is suitable for sustainable trails is still available. Recent surveys tell us that the majority of Girdwood residents would like to have more trails.

We should concentrate our trail planning process in areas where trails are sustainable.

We should designate the area that the Nordic Club outlined for a multi-use trail as a park for multi-use purposes. That location is well drained and level and it is all gravel beneath a fairly thin topsoil layer. That is perhaps the most suitable location to build trails that will grow back to become part of the environment. That would be an easily accessible location for many users.

We should build a solid unmechanized foot path along the canyon rim from the Winner Creek trail to the Arlhberg Trailhead. The trail should be well hardened to width that is wider than we desire for today's use. We can backfill the surface with native materials to make the trail narrower for today's use. If future trail use demands a larger trail, it can be widened without opening new wounds to the forest. That is a dry well drained route.

The part of Girdwild's proposed area A that is near Timberline Drive should be dedicated as a multiuse park. That neighborhood needs a community park. The park could serve as a trailhead for Virgin Creek trail as well. The Danish trail should be upgraded and connect with the Park. Pathways from Turin Drive and Carolina road should connect to the park and the Danish trail for off street downtown access.

Wagon Trail should be planned to be upgraded eventually to serve as a good walking and bicycle connection to the future Seward Highway bike path south of Girdwood through Old Girdwood then along the Iditarod trail to form a loop.

The area near the California Creek bridge could become another smaller community multi-use park. The area is well drained and would be sustainable. The new cemetery will encompass much of the ground in that area. The cemetery committee plans a trail network in that area.

The dirt social trail that is on the opposite side of the Alyeska Highway as the bike path from the Forest Service to the dump road then along the north side of the sewage plant to the Lower Iditarod Trail should be investigated. It comes up the original Crow Creek Road from Old Girdwood then follows the gas line. It would be a good alternative for people who wish an alternative to the paved bike path. I marked it on the included map.

I would like/request that this document be called the Girdwood Trails and Natural Spaces Plan.

Executive Summary – Girdwood Trails Plan Stakeholder Interviews

OBJECTIVES

Huddle AK worked in partnership with the Girdwood Trails Plan Subcommittee to develop a list of stakeholders and trail users to participate in interviews. The stakeholder group was selected to represent the variety of uses occurring on the trail system and their different perspectives of many trail users. The objective of the stakeholder conversations was to establish a baseline and better understand the current conditions of the trail system as well as varying goals and visions for the future to ensure a trails plan provides something for everyone in the Girdwood community.

METHODOLOGY

Stakeholder interviews were conducted over 60-minutes via online meeting platforms. The following set of questions was used to begin and guide each conversation:

- What is your general perception of the Girdwood trail system?
- What do you value most about the Girdwood trail system?
- What do you feel the Girdwood trail system does well? What is working? What are the strengths of the system?
- Where do you feel the Girdwood trail system could be improved? What is not working? What are the challenges within the system?
- As you look ahead to the next 15-20 years, what are the most significant challenges and opportunities for the Girdwood trail system?
- How balanced do you feel the trail system is in terms of types of trails, parks, and permitted uses on public lands?
- What are the key issues facing the trail system?
- Are there any 'missing connections' that you know of?
- What other thoughts would you like to share about the Girdwood trail system's future?
- Are there trail projects that you think need to be completed?
- What do you think about existing trail conditions and maintenance?
- What do you think about trail amenities (signs, parking, trailheads, etc.)

Huddle AK captured each conversation and provided the stakeholders a summary to review for accuracy. The interview summaries were compiled for review by the Girdwood Trails Plan Subcommittee and inclusion in the public record.

Based upon the key findings of the stakeholder interviews, an existing condition report, and a Girdwood Trail Plan Working Group work session, a vision statement for the Trails Plan process will be developed. This statement will help to focus and guide the process by creating a shared vision for the trail system informed by viewpoints and information shared by all user groups.

PARTICIPANTS

~~Girdwild~~ GirdWild
Alyeska Resort
Girdwood Nordic Ski Club
MTB Alliance

Ascending Path

Landowners and Managers

General Trail Users: Jonathan Lee, Carolyn Brodin, Paul Crews

KEY THEMES

What is meant by "Trail Town"? A formal designation, or 'we call our town a trail town'? We do not have a formal designation. I didn't see anyone actually say this in the interviews.

Girdwood is a Trail Town and Residents Value Access to Trail-Based Recreation

Many Girdwood residents were drawn to the town due to the nature of the small community and its access to trail-based recreation. Given Girdwood's proximity to Anchorage, residents value having trail access from their front door on-foot and providing recreation opportunities within the community is important to all. I don't think this is accurate. I read and hear people say they came here/were drawn to here because of the 'natural environment' - or something like that.

Girdwood residents and trail system users value the variety of activities that are possible within the trail system (i.e. hiking, biking, skijoring, downhill skiing, cross country skiing, etc.). The accessibility of the trail system, whether it be from residents' front door, or visitors having easy access from Alyeska Resort, is something the community of Girdwood appreciates and cited often.

****throughout: wherever it says 'trail system' it should read 'trails and natural spaces system'.**

The presence of Alyeska Resort, recreational opportunities, and natural beauty draws tourists year-round. There is a perception that the Girdwood trail system has the foundation, location, and potential to be a world-class trail system. With adequate public involvement in the trails planning process and a shared vision, investments in trail maintenance, improved connectivity, access, and amenities would be beneficial for residents and visitors alike. how is 'world-class trail system' being defined/described?

The Girdwood Trail System Should be Equitable and Balanced

Level of Difficulty

Bearing in mind that outdoor recreation in Alaska is somewhat more 'extreme' than one might find in other places, the opportunities within the Girdwood trail system still seem to skew towards a more experienced outdoor recreator. There is a desire for trails that are accessible and safe for hikers, bikers, and skiers of all levels. Creating opportunities at all levels of difficulty is especially important as the number of youth and tourists engaging in recreation is on the rise. As with all recreation, there is a certain level of risk to be expected. However, clearly indicating trail difficulty and conditions on maps and trailhead kiosks will offer clear expectations and yield more prepared trail users who experience less injury or accidents. As the balance of trail classifications is diversified this will become increasingly important. Tourists or out of town guests may assume that a Class 4 trail poses little risk due to being well maintained and formalized and may be ill prepared for the risks of trail-based recreation.

Allowed Uses

Due to the growing popularity of various nature and trail-based activities such as biking and skiing, the balance as well as clear indication of allowed uses in an area are needed. There is some user conflict between hikers and bikers and their desired trail experiences. However, bikers and non-bikers alike agree that more bike specific trails and areas are needed. Trails which are not designed and built for bikers sustain damage and result in increased maintenance requirements and costs.

The construction of the Nordic 5k Loop through the efforts of the Girdwood Nordic Ski Club has created a designated area of allowed use for Nordic skiers that is generally removed from other trail users

this is not accurate. they have ~3.4mi of trails and for about ~1mi of that the WC viewshed, and trail user experience, is negatively impacted.

GirdWild's efforts are missing from the discussion below.

why is the below in here? isn't is assumed that all groups will go through proper process/channels?

experience that is well-marked, and well-maintained. The Girdwood Mountain Bike Alliance is pursuing similar efforts to create trail opportunities for bikers **through the proper planning and channels**. The possibility of zoning within the trail system will be explored as it may alleviate tension between user groups and maintain areas for specific uses and desired trail experiences.

& NS

& NS

As the designation and creation of areas for allowed uses progresses, the wayfinding, signage, and mapping should be clear and well planned to create easy to follow routes and loops. It is difficult for residents and visitors alike to understand where allowed uses change. Due to the nature of the development in the Girdwood trail system so far without a master plan, the system is incohesive. Allowed uses change frequently with little marking creating a fractured, confusing experience when a trail user must change or question whether their mode of travel is allowed on a trail. One example of this is the North Face Trail at the top of Mt. Alyeska, when the trail is open to bikers, hikers get cut off and must turn around.

& NS

Range of Opportunities for All People

I agree we are trying to provide opportunities for a very diverse set of people, but ALL possible people seems impossible?

Offering opportunities for every type of resident or visitor is something that the community of Girdwood values and feels is important. Whether that is the tourist seeking a photo opportunity with very little hiking, the individual pushing a stroller or using a wheelchair, those who seek a more primitive experience in a natural space, or any other variety of trail user, the Girdwood trail system can provide options for all through proper planning. Each trail cannot cater to all, but the planning process will help determine which opportunities are already provided and what updates or additions may be made to trails to create a diverse trail system that offers something for everyone.

and nature

opportunity

existing opportunities

& NS

Balance of Trail Classifications throughout the System

There is significant diversity in the experience that trail users wish to have when using the Girdwood trail system. In order to best meet this diversity in demand, the trail system should be comprised of trails of various classifications. Girdwood residents' value the diversity among types of trails and experiences as much as they value the ability to engage in many forms of trail-based recreation. They appreciate and see the need for access to class 1 (minimally developed) trails as well as class 4 (fully developed) trails. The Bird to Gird and Nordic 5k Trails are formalized, well-maintained trails that are valued by many community members to the same degree that undeveloped, primitive trail experiences are. There was interest expressed in formalization and clearer marking of some social trail networks. Formalizing select social trails will preserve the natural environment by making it clear where trail users should travel and funneling traffic onto fewer trails. Clearer marking of the formalized trail system will prevent visitors from wandering down social trails and accidentally arriving in residents' backyards rather than their intended destination. A trail system with a balance of trail classifications will lend itself well to providing opportunities for the novice as well as advanced hiker and creating a broad range of outdoor and recreation experiences.

& NS

& NS

and nature-based

& NS

and land

*Designated Natural Spaces
Areas for No Trail Development*

...where no new trail development will occur, but which may have primitive or ephemeral trails.

While it will be vital to provide a variety of trails when it comes to difficulty, use, and trail classification, it will also be necessary to designate areas where no trail development will occur. Recent trail development and increased use within the Girdwood trail system have altered treasured primitive trail experiences. Many residents and user groups value having access to pristine wilderness areas that are

as 'natural spaces'

& NS

not just trail experiences - but also natural spaces experiences - that area was used for snowshoeing, plant gathering, etc etc

or small? When people want lots of trails, they say valley is huge...

minimally developed. The Girdwood valley is vast and with proper planning and public involvement, spaces and experiences for all user groups are possible. Areas for no trail development must still follow the proper process and channels that new trail development is subject to. It should be clear why the area has been selected, how it will be accessed, and what (if any) level of enforcement, maintenance, or involvement will be needed.

Similar language about 'proper process' needs to be included for trail development (e.g. removed from discussion of GMBA specifically, but noted in relation to trails generally).

Trail Access

There are many wonderful trails within the Girdwood trail system that are missing formal access, wayfinding, or amenities. The thought of the Girdwood trail system inundated by out of town guests is difficult for many long-time residents. The process by which trail access is created will require community input and the benefit of improved trail access for safety and rescue should be kept in mind.

While the Girdwood trail system is a valued asset of the community, the trails do not benefit from being kept a secret. Striking a balance between overuse and having enough eyes on the trail for safety and maintenance is crucial. Through conversation and planning, Girdwood may consider upgrading certain trails to support higher levels of traffic and promoting them accordingly (i.e. Winner Creek Trail). Certain trails that are not yet to that standard or do not have easy access may not be as heavily promoted. The trails that are selected for tourism and promotion should be chosen by the community and clearly marked on promotional materials and maps. This communication around access, use, and level of trail development will create a clear expectation as to the type of trail experience one can expect.

what does this mean? re 'secret'? Also - 'trails' can't benefit, or not benefit, from something?

This, to me, is an odd way of talking about use of trails. Need people on the trails for safety?? Trails and spaces with less people aren't inherently less safe. I recommend removing the first 2 sentences.

Commonly cited examples such as Wagon Trail, a historic experience that many residents value, cannot be shared or promoted with visitors due to having no trailhead at either end. Upper Virgin Creek Falls is a very popular destination that is promoted well and receives high traffic but does not have parking or restrooms to accommodate visitors. Providing easy access, formal trailheads, as well as appropriate amenities and parking for the level of use anticipated on a given trail will help to alleviate many of the current issues.

Priority Projects

- Hand Tram
- Virgin Creek Trailhead
- Max's Mountain
- Iditarod Trail
- Winner Creek Improvements lower? upper? upgrades by which entity?
- Girdwood Mountain Bike Alliance Development
- ~~Dedicated Areas for No New Trail Development~~ Dedicated natural spaces
- Increased Connectivity between existing trails (Abe's Trail and California Creek)
- Wagon Trail Access and Tread
- Beaver Pond Maintenance and Improvements
-

Trail Maintenance

While all stakeholders understand that both the coordination and cost of maintenance have been challenging, the desired level of maintenance moving forward varies among trail users due to

this section does not have a discussion of remediation, but it should be added; it was discussed in the interviews. Specifically of 5K remediation and Abe's remediation.

preference and desired trail experience. Trail classification and allowed use designation will be helpful in determining the level of maintenance on given trails.

Brushing out trails, grooming, and general trail maintenance (removing fallen trees, tread, bridges, etc.) should all be considered. Trails designated for hiking or biking with a tendency to become overgrown (such as Beaver Pond) should be brushed out with some regularity. **Most seem to be content with the level of grooming happening** and would like to hold community conversations to reach maintenance agreements for additional grooming. General trail maintenance could be conducted more regularly, but due to financial burden the Girdwood trail system relies heavily on volunteers to conduct these activities. Areas that are designated for ~~no trail development~~ ^{as natural spaces} should be relatively unmaintained to provide a more primitive trail experience and preserve natural spaces for those who seek that. ^{as well as for wildlife and ecosystem functioning.}

The level of trail maintenance required, anticipated funding, and volunteer commitment should be discussed in the initial planning stages of all new trail development. Many interviewees felt that new trail projects should not be pursued until existing trails are up to date on maintenance. ^{AND maintenance plans for each trail are needed.}

Connectivity

What expansion of allowed uses??

While **many are excited about the prospect of new trails and expansion of allowed uses**, there is consensus among those interviewed that the trail system would benefit from increased connectivity between existing trails. Creating connectivity among existing trails may consist of new trail development to close 'missing connections' as well as formalization of social trails where hikers have taken it upon themselves to establish connections.

A framework for creating access to the trail system and connectivity among current trails should exist before additional trails and new development is pursued to avoid trail relocation in the future. There is a desire for connectivity through town and around the valley, which is bifurcated by Glacier Creek and Alyeska Highway. Creek crossings will need to be addressed eventually to create the desired valley-wide connectivity. There is interest in filling in gaps to create out and back loops. One such connection is between Abe's Trail and California Creek, creating a loop would only require a small portion of trail to be formalized.

Creating connectivity among the trail system would create a more cohesive experience and additional opportunities to travel through Girdwood. With so many residents valuing the ability to travel without a car, a connected trail system utilizing the city's infrastructure is a key part of that. ^{town/village?}

Project Approval Processes

The project approval process should be transparent and understood by all. There should be adequate public involvement opportunities and communication between all parties. There is frustration among the community around an arduous trails approval process while landowners and managers are sympathetic of this and working to simplify the process. This trails ^{& NS} plan will provide some clarity around that process, establish a shared vision, and result in a community supported and adopted document that may be referenced during future trail development. ^{Also need to commit to using the plan, once approved. And ensure it is used.}

Topics that may be discussed and considered with all new trails and natural space projects include:

- Viewshed soudscape density of trails
- Land Ownership environmental impacts balance of uses
- cumulative impacts building/design standards

- Trail Maintenance (level required, current funding available, maintenance agreements)
- Access
- Trailhead Amenities (parking, restrooms, trashcans, dog stations, etc.)
- Connectivity to Nearby Trails
- Wayfinding and Signage
- Trail Classification (Class 1-4)
- Desired Level of Awareness and Use

APPENDIX – Detailed Interview Summaries

Other JRY comments:

**I would like this document to be called the Girdwood Trails and Natural Spaces Plan*

*** I hope that no one would disagree that we are discussing natural spaces - and that they are part of the system that we are collectively trying to envision? If so, that should be discussed asap as it was one of the motivating factors for this document.*

Under key themes -

I've seen and heard "Trail Town" used multiple times - and it seems to be more than in a colloquial sense. I definitely wouldn't identify 'trails town' as one of the top things that people discussed in the interviews, especially if it is being used in the more formal sense. What is meant by a Trails Town?

I think that very first sentence, which I'm guessing will be important to how this all proceeds, needs to be modified. I read in the interviews, and have heard it discussed and noted many times, that many people moved to Girdwood, or were drawn to the community - because of the natural environment. Now that may included "trail-based recreation" - but that is not a phrase or sentiment I have heard or seen expressed the way I have seen and heard "natural environment".

The issue of numbers, or implied numbers, needs to be contained. People are implying things all over the place - a rise in this, and increase in that. Fine - except if the SubC starts using these implied numbers as justification for doing or not doing certain things. And if that is the case, I'd like to see something more concrete. If that isn't possible, it should be noted.

Wherever 'trail system' is written, it should say 'trails and natural spaces system'

Wherever it says 'trail-based activities', it should say 'trail and natural space-based activities'

****I want to encourage a robust discussion of values in this Trails and Natural Spaces Plan. This has been missing in a lot of GTC documents and discussions and I really want to see that. I think it is a big gap.*

*I'd really like to see the summary, and any future documents, stop calling natural spaces 'areas for no trail development'. They should be called natural spaces, or discussed as 'dedicated NS', or 'areas dedicated as NS'. All the discussions I've been part of over the past few years have **never** discussed natural spaces this way - i.e. as banning trails, or as being locked up land, or untouchable, or off limits to people or certain uses. It is not accurate to call them 'areas for no trail development' - only people not in favor of them try to describe them that way. Here's a list of things I do in our existing natural spaces - I'm sure others could add to the list with things they do: hike, snowshoe, ski, view wildlife, seek solitude, write, paint, berry and plant gather, photography, yoga, meditation, cloud watching, climbing over things, climbing under things, mushroom hunting..... So as you can see these are not unused or locked up areas. In fact, they are probably way more multiuse than some dedicated trail areas.*

****Question for the Subc: What is a trail?*

It may seem silly at first, but I think this is an important question for subC members to consider. Is it the 4 foot wide line of packed earth (or 60 foot wide gravel swath, if you are the 5k)? or does it include what's around it, what it goes through? I think it does include those things. And if you agree that it isn't just a line on the ground or a map - then things like density, design, cumulative impacts, view sheds, soundscapes, and many other factors that need to be taken into consideration when planning and designing trails (or natural spaces).