



# MEMORANDUM

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**Ordinance 25-02, An Ordinance of the City Council of Homer, Alaska Amending the FY25 Capital Budget by Appropriating \$135,000 for the Purchase of Twenty Acres located North of Karen Hornaday Hillside Park with the Intent to Designate and Hold the Land as Public Park Land.**

**Item Type:** Backup Memorandum  
**Prepared For:** Mayor Lord and Homer City Council  
**Date:** January 2, 2025  
**From:** Julie Engebretsen, Community Development Director  
**Through:** Melissa Jacobsen, City Manager

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## Introduction

In November 2024, several large parcels were offered for sale mostly north and west of Karen Hornaday Park. All but one parcel was quickly purchased by adjoining private property owners, in the interest of protecting their view shed but also with a long term idea of an expanded public trail system. The last parcel for sale, directly north of Hornaday Park, was purchased by Homer residents in the interest of preserving the community's trail connection options. The City is very slow to move on land purchases and could not have approved a direct purchase in the timeframe these parcels were selling. The buyers of this last parcel do not wish to own the land long term and are offering the City the opportunity to purchase the property for the price they paid for it. This is the parcel that has the old road up the side up the very steep canyon.

## Analysis

Over time there has been interest in a trail system that would create trail access from central Homer up the bluff. There is additional interest in moose habitat corridors, preventing development on steep slopes and preserving green space. The community survey results from the Comprehensive Plan identified ten priorities and two of them include preserving open space and increasing access to recreation for visitors and residents. Woodard Canyon provides a unique opportunity to satisfy all these desires, within walking distance of the community core.

In the process of the area land purchases, Kachemak Heritage Land Trust and Moose Habitat Inc hosted a meeting of these area property owners and City staff to discuss what land ownership and trail connections could look like in the future. A trail system is heavily reliant on the purchase of this last parcel, because it has a natural trailhead with parking and restrooms at Hornaday Park, as well as an existing route up the bluff. Long term, staff recommends pursuit of a State of Alaska Recreational Trails Plan to do specific planning and work through these issues with willing land owners. In the near

term, the City can complete the purchase of this single parcel, and continue conversations with land owners.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt Ordinance 25-02

**Attachments**

Woodard Canyon Land Purchase Map  
Excerpt of Woodard Creek Watershed Plan  
Resolution 17-066



# Woodard Canyon Land Purchase

## General Area Map

Legend  
Transportation  
Mileposts



viewKPB

NOTE: Every reasonable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of these data. However, by accepting this material, you agree that the Kenai Peninsula Borough assumes no liability of any kind arising from the use of this data. The data are provided without warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied, including but not limited to time, money or goodwill arising from the use, operation or modification of the data. In using these data, you further agree to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless Kenai Peninsula Borough for any and all liability of any nature arising from the lack of accuracy or correctness of the data, or use of the data.



# III. Watershed Issues

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## Public Awareness & Access

Challenges arise in connecting people to watershed resources and increasing awareness about the unintended impacts that daily activities and local changes may have on Woodard Creek. General awareness of Woodard Creek is limited, due largely to the fact that over 10% of the creek is culverted. Few people understand how everyday activities impact Woodard Creek, and fewer still understand the appropriate stewardship actions needed to protect Woodard Creek. Currently, there are few public access points or paths along Woodard Creek and there is not widespread knowledge about existing creek access. The population within the watershed and surrounding community is growing, bringing new perspectives and opportunities for community connections.

## Development

Like any urbanized watershed, the Woodard Creek watershed suffers from a variety of development and related impacts that impair



Woodard Creek Coalition leads an exploration walk down Woodard Creek. Source: Lisa Holzapfel.



its natural functions and values. Some impacts are historical, while some are ongoing, and they include:

#### *Steep slope development*

The City Steep Slope Development Ordinance permits questionable development; there is little awareness of the risks associated with steep slope development and limited understanding of appropriate development practices on or near the bluff, which is subject to slope failure. An ill-conceived road in the steep confines of Woodard Canyon played a significant role in historic flooding events in 2002. Current and future development is at risk due to the potential for catastrophic landslides or collapse, which can have downstream impacts.

#### *Land clearing and accelerated runoff*

The area around Woodard Creek's headwater springs has been cleared; the removal of this vegetation has removed an important buffer for accelerated flows above Woodard Canyon.

#### *Culverts*

There are 10 culverts totaling 1065 feet along Woodard Creek; 8 of them are traditional pipe culverts, which present problems for natural flow, infiltration and ecological regimes. After Homer experienced two one-hundred-year flood events during the winter of 2002, the City replaced culverts under Fairview, Spruceview and Soundview road crossings. Unfortunately, these improvements have changed sediment transportation rates, increasing flood danger in smaller culverts.



Woodard Creek Coalition members walk down Bartlett Avenue, around private property. Source: Lisa Holzapfel. Woodard Creek flooding the road near Karen Hornaday Park in 2002. Source: Jim Preston.



There are unsafe conditions around the small culvert openings south of the Sterling Highway.

### *Channelization*

Extensive channelization along Woodard Creek has undermined the system's ability to support natural functions. Some areas of the creek have eroded down many feet, causing the Woodard Creek to become a deep gulch.

### *Impervious cover*

Development in the lower watershed—high densities of roads, parking pads, and rooftops—has reduced the watershed's infiltration capacity, accelerated polluted runoff, and increased thermal discharges.

### *Nonpoint source pollution*

Leaking oils and fuels from motor vehicles, along with pet waste, wash into Woodard Creek during precipitation events.

### *Riparian encroachment*

Filling and grading immediately adjacent to Woodard Creek has increased erosion concerns and blocked pedestrian access.

### *Wetlands dredge and fill activity*

The removal of wetlands—especially in the area just below Woodard Canyon—undermines the watershed's natural capacity to assimilate flood waters.



Woodard Creek outflow to Kachemak Bay. Source: Lisa Holzapfel.



Pioneer Avenue culvert outlet. Source: Lisa Holzapfel.



Fairview Avenue culverts. Source: Bill Spencer.

## IV. Goals and Objectives

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*The Woodard Creek Coalition developed the following goals and objectives in order to address the identified issues and achieve the community vision for the Woodard Creek Watershed.*

*In setting its goals and objectives, the Woodard Creek Coalition brought together a diverse set of people, groups, and interests. Like similar planning efforts, each group member had varying perspectives on what needed to be done, and how to do it. In the end, the group worked through a variety of options, and agreed to focus on a simple, two-tiered goal structure: “Goal 1” relates to people, and how to move them to act, while “Goal 2” focuses on the natural environment, and how to protect and restore it.*

### GOAL 1: Improve public awareness, access, and engagement with Woodard Creek

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The purpose of this goal is to educate people about the important functions and values of Woodard Creek, and by doing so, create the community momentum and political will needed to foster broad-based support for Woodard Creek enhancements.

#### *Objective 1.1: Create and enhance public access points*

In general, the Homer public does not care about Woodard Creek because they do not know it exists. Increasing access points – including gathering spaces, recreation areas, and picnic and camping sites - will invariably lead to increased community interest and support. During its deliberations over the past two years, the Woodard Creek Coalition identified areas around Karen Hornaday Park, the Pratt Museum, and Pioneer Avenue as priorities for enhanced access. Additionally, the group identified the new box culvert under Spruceview Avenue as a model for streambed access which should be emulated, and highlighted removal of the Pioneer Avenue culvert as a priority. The Woodard Creek

Coalition will develop projects in order to increase access and public awareness around these sites.

#### *Objective 1.2: Increase outreach, education and stewardship opportunities*

As the community increasingly views Woodard Creek as a valuable asset, it is important to provide open and specific avenues for individuals and groups to get involved. As community awareness and support grow, there will be increased opportunities for trails work, trash clean up, culvert sweeps, creek walks and other activities.

#### *Objective 1.3: Integrate Woodard Creek into local planning efforts*

Considerable work went into developing the Woodard Creek Watershed Plan. This plan’s permanence rests on whether it becomes formalized into local and regional planning efforts. The Woodard Creek Coalition will seek to incorporate this plan into City of Homer planning efforts.

**CITY OF HOMER  
HOMER, ALASKA**

Aderhold

**RESOLUTION 17-066**

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF HOMER, ALASKA, RECOGNIZING THE FUNCTIONS AND VALUES OF THE WOODARD CREEK WATERSHED, ACKNOWLEDGING THE WOODARD CREEK COALITION'S FEBRUARY 2017 WOODARD CREEK WATERSHED PLAN, REFERENCING APPROPRIATE SECTIONS OF THE PLAN IN THE CITY OF HOMER'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, PROMOTING THE PLAN ON THE CITY OF HOMER'S WEBSITE, AND MAKING THE PLAN AVAILABLE FOR REFERENCE IN THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT.

WHEREAS, Woodard Creek, which flows from its headwaters atop the bluff through Homer's central business district and into the Kachemak Bay Critical Habitat Area at Bishop's Beach, is Homer's most prominent perennial stream; and

WHEREAS, The Woodard Creek watershed rests largely in an area considered urban/residential under the City of Homer building code, and South Peninsula Hospital, Pratt Museum, Saint John's Baptist Church, many private residences and small businesses, and Karen Hornaday Park and the Homer Playground are built within the Woodard Creek watershed; and

WHEREAS, Development has changed the natural flow of Woodard Creek through channelization, culverts, and riparian encroachment; and

WHEREAS, Woodard Creek is subject to flooding and erosion during storm events, which can damage private property, roads, and other important infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, In spite of these modifications, Woodard Creek continues to support vibrant ecological and aesthetic functions and values, including native plants, large and small mammals, birds, insects, microbes, and nutrients that natural systems need to flourish; and

WHEREAS, Woodard Creek is a vital community asset that enhances conservation efforts, promotes recreational outlets, protects against flooding hazards, adds value to the central business district, and enhances the quality of life for residents and tourists alike; and

WHEREAS, Interested Homer citizens, the Kachemak Bay Conservation Society, Cook Inletkeeper, Friends of Woodard Creek and Karen Hornaday Park, the Pratt Museum, Homer Council on the Arts, Bunnell Street Art Center, Homer Soil and Water Conservation District, Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, Alaska Department of Fish and



Game, Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships, South Peninsula Hospital, Kenai Watershed Forum, and the City of Homer formed the Woodard Creek Coalition; and

WHEREAS, The Woodard Creek Coalition received a grant from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program to develop a plan for Woodard Creek; and

WHEREAS, The mission of the Woodard Creek Coalition is to bring together diverse groups, property owners, and citizens to promote the health and safety of the Woodard Creek watershed as a community asset; and

WHEREAS, The City of Homer Planning Department participated in the planning and drafting of the Woodard Creek Watershed Plan; and

WHEREAS, The Woodard Creek Coalition completed the Woodard Creek Watershed Plan in February 2017 after numerous public meetings and opportunities for public comment; and

WHEREAS, The Woodard Creek Watershed Plan characterizes the watershed, discusses watershed issues, details goals and objectives to improve public awareness and restore and protect the natural functions and flow of Woodard Creek, and provides an action plan for meeting the goals and objectives.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the that the City Council of Homer, Alaska hereby recognizes the natural functions and values of the Woodard Creek watershed and acknowledges the Woodard Creek Coalition's February 2017 Woodard Creek Watershed Plan; and


BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Homer will reference appropriate sections of the Woodard Creek Watershed Plan in its revisions to the City of Homer Comprehensive Plan; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Homer will promote the Woodard Creek Watershed Plan on the Planning Department's page of the City of Homer's Planning website and will make the plan available in the Planning Department for reference by home and business owners living in the Woodard Creek watershed.

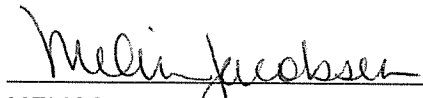
PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Homer City Council, this 26<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2017.

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CITY OF HOMER

  
BRYAN ZAK, MAYOR

ATTEST:

  
MELISSA JACOBSEN, MMC, CITY CLERK







**TOTAL ACREAGE:** 20

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:**

T 6S R 13W SEC 18 SEWARD MERIDIAN HM S1/2 NW1/4 SE1/4

**PHYSICAL ADDRESS(ES):**

4350 KAREN HORNADAY RD



**VALUE INFORMATION:**

Land:	\$166,700
Improvement:	\$
Total Assessed:	\$166,700
Exemption:	\$
Taxable Value:	\$166,700

**OWNERSHIP INFORMATION:**

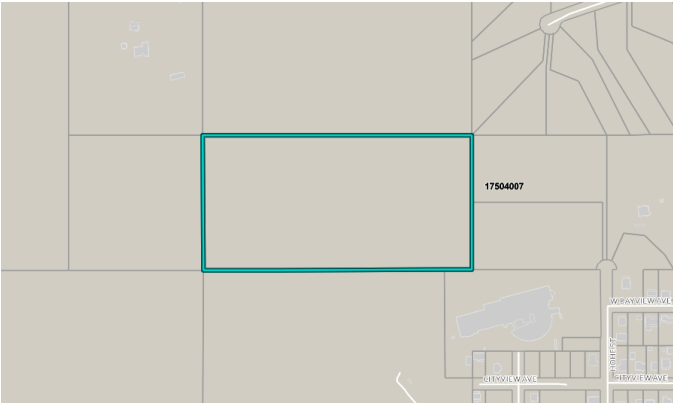
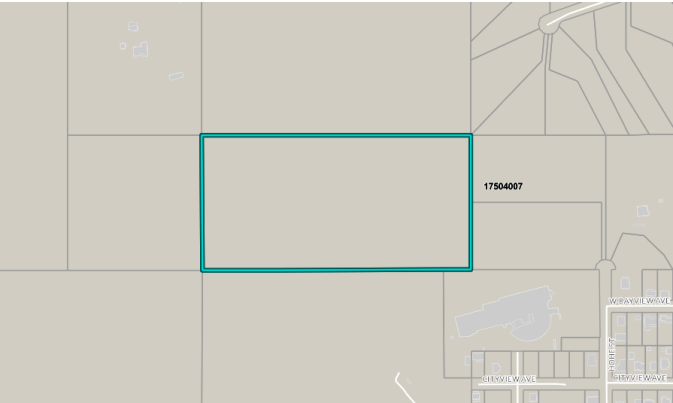
TERRA BELLA PROPERTIES LLC  
1430 K ST  
ANCHORAGE, AK  
99501

**BUILDINGS:**

Improvement Type:  
Building Type:  
Year Built:  
Total Sq Ft:

ZONING

**Zoning information presented here is derived from an automated overlay of the parcel indicated and zoning-related spatial information. It is presented for informational purposes only. No reliance should be placed upon the zoning information presented here and KPB assumes no liability whatsoever for the correctness thereof. Always confirm this information with KPB staff.**



LOZ

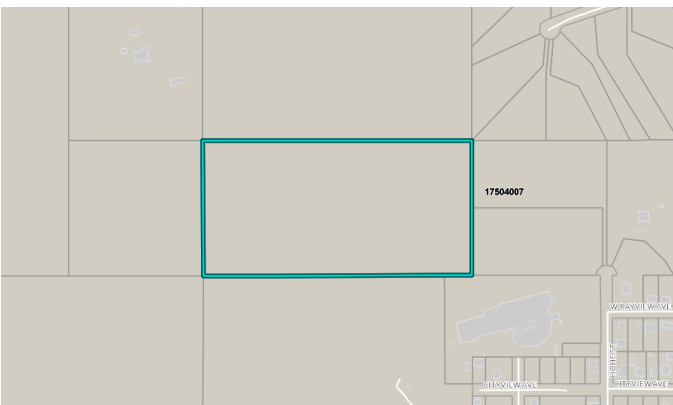
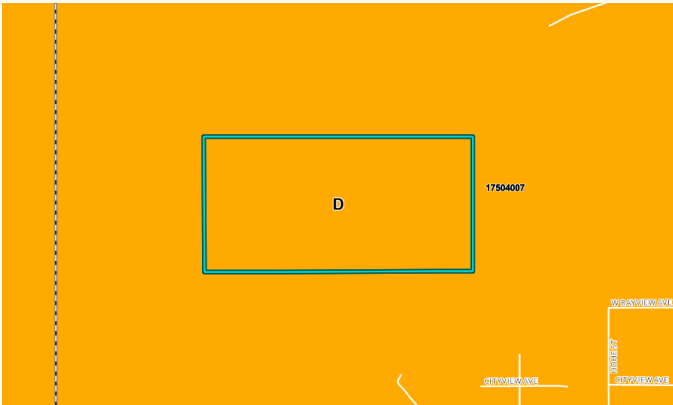
**LOCAL OPTION ZONING DISTRICTS**  
KPB 21.44

Local Option Zoning Districts will appear on the map if they are nearby or on the selected parcel. If the selected parcel is within an LOZD, the property is considered zoned under KPB 21.44, and building permits may be required.

PEU CLUP CP EXPIRED

**MATERIALS SITES ZONING**  
KPB 21.19

Registered Material Sites (gravel pits) will appear on the map if they are nearby or on the selected parcel. Material Sites are regulated by KPB 21.29, and are differentiated by type: PEU (Prior Existing Use), CLUP (Conditional Land Use Permit), and CP (Counter Permits). Any permits that have expired will be depicted on the map.



**FLOODPLAIN ZONING**  
KPB 21.06

FEMA-mapped floodplain zones will appear on the map if they are nearby or on the selected parcel. If the selected parcel is within a regulatory floodplain, the property is considered zoned under KPB 21.06 and building permits may be required. This map is presented for informational purposes only and should not be used to determine a property's flood risk. Please request a Floodplain Determination from KPB staff for additional floodplain information.

**Managed Rivers, Streams and Lakes**  
**ANADROMOUS WATERS ZONING**  
KPB 21.18

Anadromous rivers, streams, and lakes will appear on the map if they are nearby or on the selected parcel. If the selected parcel intersects an anadromous waterbody, its lands within 50 feet of Ordinary High Water are considered zoned under KPB 21.18, and building permits may be required. Note that waterbodies can move over time and the lines (as drawn here) may not depict the true location of the waterbody. Please contact KPB staff to confirm the waterbody's true location.