



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Lord and City Council
Date: May 29, 2025
From: Daniel Kort, Public Works Director
Through: Melissa Jacobsen, City Manager
Subject: Karen Hornaday Park Trail

Background:

There is a proposal for City Staff to install flagging for a proposed rudimentary trail route using a combination of existing paths and game trails for a new trail network on the new City owned property above Karen Hornaday Park. The proposal suggests using volunteers to cut vegetation and create a well-defined footpath similar to a Level I Trail as an inexpensive way to kick off a hiking trail into the newly acquired property rather than conducting a more formalized approach at developing a trail network.

Discussion:

We appreciate that trails enthusiasts are anxious to get out on a new local trail right in the heart of Homer, and we look forward to bringing that dream into fruition. The Public Works Department has been working toward a formal design and construction plan for a trail network on the newly acquired property above Karen Hornaday Park. The vision of this proposed trail by the Parks Division is for it to be a “scenic vista trail” that would complement both the Karen Hornaday Park and re-opened Campground. It’s a project we’d hoped to initiate this summer but with other projects vying for HART Trails fund it may likely be delayed.

Developing a rudimentary trail with volunteers removing vegetation raises concerns for staff because this City property is on a steep slope. Planning staff confirmed the lot has an average slope over 15% making it subject to the steep slope development standards in Homer City Code (HCC). HCC 21.44.030 Slope Development Standards explain that no development activity, including clearing and grading may occur before the issuance of zoning permit under Chapter 21.70.

HCC 21.03 defines that “Clearing” means the removal of trees and brush from the land, but shall not include the ordinary pruning of trees or shrubs or mowing of grass. Alders are already being cut down along the area.

Additionally, previous development activities including construction of the existing road/trail which is now overgrown with alder brush, had resulted in slope stability issues and landslides. This is the backbone of the existing planned trail. The cutting of alder along this route in combination with the development of a primitive trail, could allow previous slope stability issues to return.

The Public Works Department takes the conservative position that the City should follow HCC 21.44 because foot paths, trails and sidewalks fall under the definition of development in this section, and 21.70 for proper permitting. This will also provide for review and input from the Parks, Art, Recreation, and Culture Advisory Commission and possibly the Planning Commission.

Attachments:

Public Works trail concept
HCC 21.44

PHASE I - Karen Hornaday Park Trail



The Red dots indicate locations for scenic overviews of the City and Kachemak Bay. The City is considering placement of benches and or picnic tables at these locations.

The location of Phase II trail's are to be determined.

Chapter 21.44

SLOPES AND COASTAL DEVELOPMENT

Sections:

- 21.44.010 Purpose and intent.
- 21.44.020 Applicability.
- 21.44.030 Slope development standards.
- 21.44.040 Exceptions to setback requirements.
- 21.44.050 Site plan requirements for slope development.

21.44.010 Purpose and intent.

This chapter regulates development activity and structures in areas affected by slopes, bluffs, ravines, and the coastal edge, and provides the means for additional review and protection to encourage safe and orderly growth to promote the health, welfare and safety of Homer residents. [Ord. 22-32 § 2, 2022; Ord. 08-29, 2008].

21.44.020 Applicability.

a. This chapter applies to all development activity that disturbs the existing land surface, including without limitation clearing, grading, excavating and filling in areas that are subject to any of the following conditions:

1. Lots with average slopes 15 percent or greater, bluffs, coastal edge and ravines;
2. Located within 40 feet of the top or within 15 feet of the toe of a steep slope, bluff, coastal edge or ravine; and
3. Any other location where the City Engineer determines that adverse conditions associated with slope stability, erosion or sedimentation are present.

b. This chapter imposes regulations and standards in addition to the requirements of the underlying zoning district(s). [Ord. 22-32 § 2, 2022; Ord. 08-29, 2008].

21.44.030 Slope development standards.

The following standards apply to all development activity on a site described in HCC 21.44.020:

a. No development activity, including clearing and grading, may occur before the issuance of a zoning permit under Chapter 21.70 HCC.

b. Area of Development.

1. Except where the City Engineer approves a site plan under HCC 21.44.050 that provides for a larger area of development, the area of development on a lot with an average slope:

- a. Of 15 to 30 percent shall not exceed 25 percent of the total lot area.
- b. Greater than 30 percent but less than 45 percent shall not exceed 10 percent of the total lot area.

2. The area of development on a lot with an average slope of 45 percent or greater shall not exceed the area of development described in a site plan approved by the City Engineer under HCC 21.44.050.

c. Setbacks. Subject to the exceptions to setback requirements in HCC 21.44.040, all development activity is subject to the following setback requirements:

1. No structure may be closer to the top of a ravine, steep slope or bluff than the lesser of:
 - a. Forty feet; or
 - b. One-third of the height of the bluff or steep slope, but not less than 15 feet.

2. No structure may be closer than 15 feet to the toe of a bluff.

3. Structures shall be set back 40 feet from the coastal edge starting at the eastern extent of the City of Homer, adjacent to Kachemak Bay extending to the north-south section line dividing Sections 19 and 24 Township 6 South Range 14 West Seward Meridian, and excluding all property South of Mile Post 175 of the Sterling Highway. All structures west of the section line shall be set back 60 feet from the coastal edge. No structure may be placed closer than 15 feet from the toe of a coastal edge.

d. Natural Drainage. The site design and development activity shall not restrict natural drainage patterns, except as provided in this subsection.

1. To the maximum extent feasible, the natural surface drainage patterns unique to the topography and vegetation of the site shall be preserved. Natural surface drainage patterns may be modified only pursuant to a site plan approved by the City Engineer under HCC 21.44.050, and upon a showing that there will be no significant adverse environmental impacts on the site or on adjacent properties. If natural drainage patterns are modified, appropriate soil stabilization techniques shall be employed.

2. The site shall be graded as necessary to ensure that drainage flows away from all structures for a distance of at least 10 feet, especially where building pads are cut into hillsides.

3. The development activity shall not cause an adverse effect on adjacent land and surrounding drainage patterns.

e. Erosion Control.

1. Erosion control methods approved by the City Engineer, including without limitation sediment traps, small dams and barriers, shall be used during construction and site development to protect water quality, control soil erosion and control the velocity of runoff.

2. Winter Erosion Control Blankets. If development on a slope is not stabilized by October 15th, erosion control blankets (or a product with equivalent performance characteristics) must be installed upon completion of the seasonal work, but no later than October 15th. The erosion control blankets shall remain in place until at least the following May.

3. Vegetation shall remain undisturbed except as necessary to construct improvements and to eliminate hazardous conditions, in which case it must be replanted with approved materials including ground cover, shrubs and trees. Native vegetation is preferred for replanting operations, and will be used where practicable.

4. Grading shall not alter the natural contours of the terrain except as necessary for building sites or to correct unsafe conditions. The locations of buildings and roads shall be planned to follow and conform to existing contours as nearly as possible. [Ord. 22-32 § 2, 2022; Ord. 08-29, 2008].

21.44.040 Exceptions to setback requirements.

a. Any of the following may be located within a setback required by HCC 21.44.030(c):

1. A deck extending no more than five feet into the required setback.

2. An unoccupied accessory structure having a building area not greater than 200 square feet that is no closer than 15 feet to the top of any bluff or ravine.

3. A boardwalk, sidewalk, foot path or stairway that provides access to a beach, bluff or accessory structure, and that is located at or within three feet above ground level.

4. Development activity that the City Engineer determines is reasonably intended to stabilize an eroding coastal edge.

b. No structure other than a structure described in subsection (a) of this section may be located in a required setback without a conditional use permit issued in accordance with Chapter 21.71 HCC and a site plan approved by the City Engineer under HCC 21.44.050. [Ord. 22-32 § 2, 2022; Ord. 08-29, 2008].

21.44.050 Site plan requirements for slope development.

a. No permit for development activity for which HCC 21.44.030 or 21.44.040(b) requires a site plan may be approved unless the City Engineer approves a site plan for the development activity that conforms to the requirements of this section. The City Engineer shall accept or reject the plan as submitted or may require that specific conditions be complied with in order for the plan to meet approval.

b. The site plan shall be prepared by a qualified geotechnical engineer licensed to practice in the State of Alaska and shall include the following information:

1. The location of all watercourses, water bodies, and wetlands within 100 feet of the location of the proposed development activity.
2. The location of all existing and proposed drainage structures and patterns.
3. Site topography shown by contours with a maximum vertical interval of five feet.
4. The location of all proposed and existing buildings, utilities (including on-site well and septic facilities), driveways and streets.
5. The location of all existing vegetation types including meadow, forest and scrub lands, identifying all areas of vegetation that will be removed as well as vegetation to be preserved or replaced. Specifications for revegetation shall also be included.
6. Specific methods that will be used to control soil erosion, sedimentation, and excessive stormwater runoff during and after construction.
7. A description of the stability of the existing soils on site and a narrative and other detail sufficient to demonstrate the appropriateness of the development and construction methods proposed.
8. A grading plan for all areas that will be disturbed by the development activity.
9. A slope stability analysis including the following:
 - a. Summary of all subsurface exploration data, including subsurface soil profile, exploration logs, laboratory or in situ test results, and groundwater information;
 - b. Interpretation and analysis of the subsurface data;
 - c. Summary of seismic concerns and recommended mitigation;
 - d. Specific engineering recommendations for design;
 - e. Discussion of conditions for solution of anticipated problems;
 - f. Recommended geotechnical special provisions;
 - g. An opinion on adequacy for the intended use of sites to be developed by the proposed grading as affected by soils engineering factors, including the stability of slopes. [Ord. 22-32 § 2, 2022; Ord. 10-56 § 2, 2011].