



RECREATION

Anchorage residents value the local parks and opportunities for recreation. Planning for and retention of natural open space were listed as top priorities by community residents in *Anchorage 2020*. A Community Preference Survey described in the 2006 *Anchorage Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan* (Park Plan) shows that the highest recreation activity participation rates are biking on paved trails and hiking/walking on city trails at rates far exceeding national averages.

The parks, recreation, greenbelts and natural open spaces within West Anchorage and the entire Bowl are major community assets, serving residents and visitors. West Anchorage contains some of the oldest settled areas of Anchorage, which also have the greatest potential for renewal and redevelopment. However, development pressures and funding constraints pose increasing challenges for conservation and enhancement of open space and its natural qualities.

Parks and Open Spaces

MOA manages 223 parks and natural open space areas and 110 athletic fields within Anchorage, which cover 10,946 acres. Figure F-1 contains the park names in West Anchorage. MOA also maintains an extensive trails system, with more than 250 miles of trails and greenbelts that link neighborhoods with surrounding natural open spaces and wildlife habitat (see Figure E-5 in the Transportation Chapter). Three large regional parks (Kincaid Park, Far North Bicentennial Park, and Ruth Arcand Park) account for approximately 60% of the total park acreage in the Bowl. One of these large parks, Kincaid Park, is located within the West Anchorage planning area and consists of large tracts of natural open space, summer/winter recreational trails, race stadium, and soccer field complex.

Several park and trail facilities exist within the airport boundaries on State-owned property reserved for future airport development including: Spenard Lake Beach, Pt. Woronzof, Connor's Bog, Coastal Trail Access Road, Delong Lake and Little Campbell Lake as well as some parts of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail and Sisson Loop. These recreational facilities are accessible to the public through short-term maintenance agreements granted to the MOA by the State, most of which are in holdover status.

If any airport lands currently used for recreational purposes (under agreement with the State and MOA) are considered for use by the airport for non-recreational purposes, TSAIA and MOA would conduct a collaborative public process. Options would be examined before making any final decisions that result in the loss of airport property for recreational purposes or open space areas.

Parks and Open Space

- X** Pop Carr Park
- W** Point Woronzof Park
- P** LaHonda Park
- Q** Linden Park
- V** Pleasant Drive Park
- T** Pamela Joy Lowry Memorial Park
- R** Marston Park
- S** Northwood Park
- U** Petes Park
- A** Arctic Circle Park
- B** Atwood Park
- C** Bentzen Lake Park
- D** Campbell Creek Greenbelt
- E** Clay Park
- F** Cutty Sark Park
- G** DeLong Lake Park
- H** Didlika Park
- I** Earthquake Park
- J** Edna M Fisk Memorial Park
- K** Fish Creek Greenbelt
- L** Gladys Wood Park
- M** High Tide Park
- N** Iliamna Park
- O** Jewel Lake Park
- Y** Roosevelt Park
- Z** Sand Lake Park
- a** Spenard Beach Park
- b** Telequana Park
- c** Tony Knowles Coastal Trail and Greenbelt
- d** Westchester Lagoon/Chester Creek Greenbelt
- e** Whitehall Street Park
- f** Connor's Lake Park

Parks with Playing Fields

- 1** Balto Seppala Park
- 2** Brotherhood/Sisterhood Park
- 3** Jade Street Park
- 4** Kincaid Park
- 5** Javier de la Vega Park
- 6** Shady Birch Park
- 7** Lloyd Steele Park
- 8** Lyn Ary Park



Management guidelines and priorities for natural open space within Anchorage were first outlined in *Anchorage 2020*. These are areas that provide for significant natural functions around the Bowl. They are the natural landscapes and stream corridors that link neighborhoods, parks, and schools, and act as buffers between different land uses. They can also serve as habitat and movement corridors for wildlife, and assist with the health of the watershed by retaining and filtering storm water. Previous municipal plans had not clearly identified open natural areas that are important in an undisturbed state. The *Park Plan* formalized the Natural Resource Use area as a park classification. Final locations, designations, and acreages of the new Natural Resource Use areas will be determined through master planning actions within each park district (MOA, 2006). Protection of natural open space areas currently within airport property would necessitate collaboration between the MOA, TSAIA, FAA, and the general public.

The majority of the West Anchorage planning area falls within two Park and Recreation Districts, as identified by the *Anchorage Park Plan*: Northwest and Southwest.

Northwest Parks District

The Northwest District has the largest concentration of parks and recreation facilities in the Bowl, but the lowest total park acreage (817 acres). Most parks are considered mini-parks or neighborhood parks with acreage below the minimum recommended. Neighborhood parks form the backbone of the park system and are typically 5 to 10 acres. Mini-parks are smaller areas when land is not available for a larger neighborhood park. Mini-parks can be between 1 and 5 acres in size (MOA, 2006). Due to the historic settlement patterns of the area, additional land within residential areas will be difficult to acquire for public park lands; however, there are opportunities to add additional natural open space parkland to the district in and around the airport area. Key Northwest District parks and recreation facilities that are within West Anchorage planning boundaries include Westchester Lagoon, Spenard Recreation Center, and a portion of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. There is a swimming pool, tennis courts, and ball fields at West High School/Romig Middle School.

Spenard Recreation Center contains the Northwest Parks District office and an indoor gymnasium that houses basketball, volleyball, indoor soccer, and badminton. There are also racquetball courts and a weight room. Spenard Rec offers a variety of programs for youth and adults from across Anchorage including classes, community and religious meeting space. Spenard Recreation Center would like to secure funding for gates to keep after-hours traffic from entering its parking lot to increase public safety. It is also home to the Spenard Skate Park, which is used by skateboarders, BMX bikers, and inline skaters (MOA, 2009).

Southwest Parks District

The Southwest District is characterized by well-developed recreational trail systems. It has a large concentration of Natural Resource Use areas (areas designated for preservation rather than public use), but a low amount of developed parks (designed for public use). Key Southwest District parks that are within West Anchorage planning boundaries include Kincaid Park, Javier de la Vega Sports Park, Jewel Lake Park, and a portion of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. There are plans to expand and develop recreation facilities at Kincaid Park through the completion of a soccer complex, expansion of the winter recreation area for cross-country skiing/biathlon, and indoor facility upgrades to the Kincaid Chalet (that contains the Southwest Parks District office) (MOA, 2006). The Kincaid complex also includes a motocross race track at its southwest border (Anchorage Nordic Association, 2009).

Lakes

Some of the most popular recreational destinations within West Anchorage include Jewel Lake, Sand Lake, and Little Campbell Lake. Activities on these lakes include boating, sailing, swimming, fishing, and wildlife viewing. Some of these lakes are also used as floatplane landing areas, which can create user conflicts.

TSAIA and MOA have a short-term maintenance agreement (currently in need of renewal) for the northern portion of Connor's Bog in West Anchorage that allows off-leash dog activity (one of only five in Anchorage) and groomed skijoring trails in winter. Future development and disturbance in this area could create detrimental impacts to breeding Pacific loons that nest annually (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS], 2000). Anchorage has the distinction of being the largest city in North America to still support nesting loons. Connors Bog contains a variety of trails and diverse habitats that create excellent wildlife viewing opportunities for small mammals, moose, and many species of birds (MOA, 2009e). TSAIA also owns the property around Little Campbell Lake which is stocked for recreational fishing. MOA manages this area as a park under a short-term maintenance agreement (currently in need of renewal).

Multi-Use Sports Parks

West Anchorage is also home to numerous multi-use athletic fields that can host soccer, softball, and baseball games. These fields include Lyn Ary Park, Lloyd Steele Park, Balto Seppala Park, Javier de la Vega Park, and Jade Park (shown in Figure F-1). Lyn Ary Park in Turnagain includes tennis courts and playground equipment and has access to the Coastal Trail. West Anchorage's largest multi-use sports park, Javier de la Vega, currently lacks adequate links into the existing trail system (Anchorage Parks Foundation, 2009).

Trails

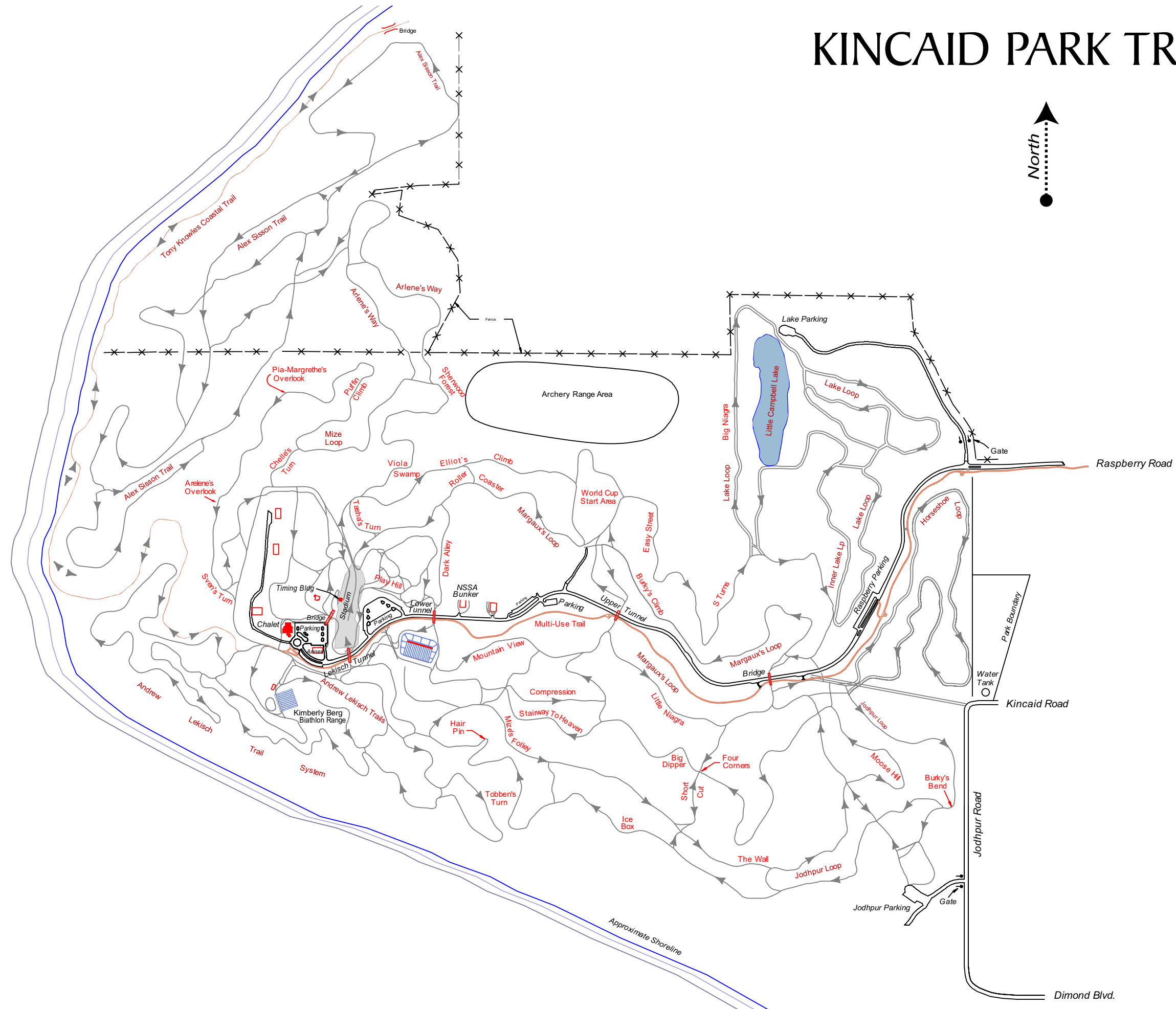
Trails and connectors provide non-motorized links between residential areas, parks and schools, and recreation opportunities (Figure E-3). Residents of Anchorage have a wide variety of summer and winter trail interests. Most trails are paved and appropriate for multiple uses (e.g., jogging, bicycling, rollerblading), while others are unpaved and offer opportunities for other users (e.g., horseback riding, mountain biking). Some ski trails in Kincaid Park are single-use in winter only for cross-country skiing.

Trail classification typically consists of such elements as paved multi-use trails, natural surface trails, trailheads (parking areas) (MOA, 2006). The *1997 Areawide Trails Plan* identifies that it is MOA policy to treat bikeways and other various natural forms of non-motorized transport as important elements of the overall transportation system. The *Trails Plan* will be the third element of the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan to be updated after the *Anchorage Pedestrian Plan* (MOA, 2007a) and the *Anchorage Bicycle Plan* (MOA, 2009a). The Non-Motorized Transportation Plan helps identify and prioritize projects funded through AMATS and the capital improvements program of the MOA.

The West Anchorage planning area contains portions of the Coastal Trail, the Kincaid Park trails, permitted trails on airport property, and portions of the Campbell Creek Trail. These areas are heavily used by residents within and outside the planning area.

TSAIA property includes some vacant lands reserved for future air transportation related development. Some of these lands are used for recreational purposes under a formal, short-term agreement, easement, or permit between MOA and the State. The public currently has access to these leased lands even though many of the agreements are expired. An example of one of these areas that has long-term community value is the Alex Sisson Trails on airport and HLB land. This unpaved multiuse trail network is shown in Figure F-2, an Anchorage Nordic Association trail map in Kincaid Park. Future plans to extend the western end of the east-west runways would necessitate the relocation of some of the trails. The airport has worked with the Nordic Ski Club and other trail advocates on choosing an alternative route for the portion of the trail affected by the runway extension.

KINCAID PARK TRAILS



Access

ROWs through private lands were not planned during development around Campbell Lake, Sand Lake, Sundi Lake, and Pt. Woronzof Park, therefore public access is limited. The Coastal Trail has specific access points in limited ROW from private landowners and TSAIA. The South Coastal Trail extension remains a long-term goal of the MOA, but its development would require ROW from private land owners.

Maintenance

There are annual capital requests from local, State, Federal and private donors to make improvements to multi-use athletic fields, neighborhood parks, recreation facilities, and greenbelt trails. For example, the Coastal Trail is in need of upgrades to existing pavement, widening due to heavy recreational use, and erosion control along certain portions of the coast. Many of the parks and athletic fields, as well facilities such as the Spenard Recreation Center and the West High swimming pool are also in need of upgrades.

Needs

The Park Plan identified issues and needs for each of the five Park and Recreation Districts. The Park Plan recommendations aim to address opportunities within the natural limits of each area.

In the Northwest District, there is a deficiency of Neighborhood Use parks in the Turnagain and Spenard areas. Existing parks can be upgraded or new Neighborhood Use facilities can be developed in dedicated parks to address this need. The Northwest District also has a shortage of Natural Use areas due to the higher density of residential development and the limited supply of land. Facilities for indoor and outdoor recreation are in adequate supply, with the exception of open playfields which are in short supply. Several facilities are in need of upgrades including the Spenard Recreation Center and the West High School swimming pool. Portions of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail also need upgrades to pavement, widening due to heavy use, and erosion control along certain areas of the coast.

In the Southwest District, the Sand Lake area was identified as deficient in numbers of Neighborhood Use parks. The district as a whole requires three to seven new Neighborhood Use parks between 5 and 10 acres over the next 20 years without utilizing elementary school sites in order to meet planning standards. There is a need to develop a resource management plan for Kincaid Park and other Natural Use areas in the district. Kincaid Park contained a new soccer complex, and but needs upgrades to existing indoor facilities. Park access, trails and connectivity needs include connecting Javier de la Vega Park to the trail system, improving access to Kincaid Park and encouraging pedestrian connections between Kincaid and Potter Marsh, and connecting Connors Lake Park to the Campbell Creek Greenbelt Trail.