

TIKISHLA PARK

MASTER PLAN

December 7, 2016 (5:30-7:30pm)
Advisory Group Meeting #2
Anchorage Unitarian Universalist Fellowship



Advisory Group Meeting #2 Minutes

Overview

Anchorage Parks and Recreation is developing a master plan for Tikishla Park. The master plan will provide a framework for development of facilities, playing fields and other park assets over the next 20 years. To ensure that the master plan aligns with the desires of the community, Parks and Recreation is working with a stakeholder advisory group.

The Tikishla Park master plan advisory group was formed to provide input and recommendations that will help guide Parks and Recreation in the development of the master plan. Advisory group members represent a variety of interests including neighbors, user groups, natural resource managers, community councils, non-profit organizations, and community leaders. These key stakeholders provide a range of perspectives and first-hand knowledge that will inform the process and ensure that future upgrades meet the needs and expectations of the community.

The second advisory group meeting for the Tikishla Park master plan took place on December 7th, 2016 at the Anchorage Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Airport Heights.

Attendees

ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS & P&R STAFF

- Ed Brewer, Neighbor
- Kyle Cunningham, MOA Watershed Management
- Rob Gambill, City View Little League
- Carlos Gomez, Scotty Gomez Foundation
- Jonny Hayes, Neighbor
- Heather Ireland, RPCC
- Zack Kerr, ARC of Anchorage
- Edith McKee, Neighbor, Dog Owner
- Brad Muir, Neighbor, MOA Natural Resource Manager
- Teri Penn, AHCC, Eastridge Condo Association

- Vik Patel, MOA Parks and Recreation
- Steve Rafuse, MOA Parks and Recreation
- Carolyn Ramsey, AHCC
- Kalen Saxton, AHCC

GUEST

- Sally Gilbert
- Barbara Hosier
- Helen O'Hara
- Dick Mylius
- Gayle Nienhueser
- Lester Sheppard
- Tim Potter
- Dick Snyder

Meeting Synopsis

MOA Parks and Recreation planner Steve Rafuse began the meeting with a welcome and overview of the meeting agenda. Steve reviewed the planning and public involvement timeline and re-iterated that the role of the advisory group was to ensure that the master plan accurately reflects the vision of the broader community. The goal of the second advisory group meeting was *"to review information gathered to date and begin the process of identifying future management and development priorities that will be formalized in the Tikishla Park Master Plan update"*. The meeting continued with a recap of the ground rules for a productive meeting.

Following the meeting overview, Steve acknowledged the recent passing of advisory group member Sharron Harris and invited members of the group to share a memory in Sharron's honor.

Steve spent the next 20 minutes reviewing input from the online survey and open house event. Close to 200 survey responses were received totaling approximately 1000 recorded comments. Additionally, 60-70 people attended the open house event and many comments were received. Given the large amount of comments, Steve presented the general themes for each topic and use area.

Steve continued with a review of additional themes relating to potential new improvements, issues and concerns, and input specific to the four identified use areas. Members of the advisory group asked some questions and generally agreed that the identified themes accurately represent the sentiments of the community at large.

The meeting continued with a focused group discussion of the use areas in Tikishla Park: 1) Tikishla Park (E 20th Ave), 2) Davenport Fields, 3) Trails, and 4) Natural Areas. Time was limited and the group was only able to discuss Tikishla Park (E 20th Ave), Trails, and Natural Areas.

The last twenty minutes of the meeting was set aside for Les Sheppard and Tim Potter, Dowl Engineering, to present their proposal for an Indoor Tennis Facility. Mr. Sheppard and Mr. Potter shared their proposal and work to date. The advisory group asked questions and shared their sentiments on the proposed facility. Advisory group members shared that an indoor tennis facility such as the one proposed by Mr. Sheppard and Mr. Potter is not supported by the community at this location and that other locations outside the park would be more suitable.

The meeting concluded with a few questions about topics discussed, next steps, and future meeting dates.

Public Input Review

Comments from the online survey and open house were summarized and presented to the group for review. The goal of this exercise was to provide advisory group members with a foundation for future planning of improvements to ensure that recommendations accurately reflect the community's wishes for the management, maintenance, and development of the park.

While reviewing this information, the advisory group was asked to consider how items could be implemented. The following questions were posed to the group:

- What projects or improvements can be done with volunteers?
- What are quick maintenance fixes that would make a difference in the near future?
- What projects require capital funds and fundraising?
- What are the short-term priorities?
- What are longer-term priorities?

Below is a summary of the general themes presented to the advisory group. Themes are based on input gathered from the online survey and the open house event.

Major Themes:

- Tikishla Park is a neighborhood hub and community gathering place
- Tikishla Park has the right balance of developed facilities and natural areas
- Tikishla Park is valued for its trail access, neighborhood connections and year-round recreation
- Natural areas should be preserved and protected
- Safety, homeless camps and other issues need to be addressed
- Improvements should focus on upgrading existing facilities and not major new development
- The community does not support an indoor tennis facility at Tikishla Park

What is special about Tikishla Park?

- A Neighborhood Hub: Tikishla Park is a special place for the community to gather, a park for families and all ages to come together, multi-generational
- A Balance of Developed and Natural Areas: Tikishla Park has the right balance of developed facilities and natural areas interconnected by a system of paved and soft-surface trails
- Year-round Recreation: Tikishla Park has something for everyone, the park offers a wide variety of recreational activities in all seasons
- Access and Location: Tikishla Park has many neighborhood connections and easy access to the greenbelt system and destinations beyond
- Wilderness in the City: The natural areas of Tikishla Park are highly valued for recreation, wildlife, habitat, and quiet contemplation

Describe your ideal Tikishla Park?

- As Is... Only Better: Tikishla Park is already a successful park, upgrades to existing facilities is preferred over major new development
- Safe, Clean, and Well Maintained: Safety is a major issue, eliminating drug activity and addressing homeless camps would improve park users perception of safety and would lead to a cleaner healthier park environment
- Mix of Uses: Tikishla Park is valued for its mix of developed facilities and natural areas
- Family Friendly and Accessible to All: Tikishla Park is a neighborhood hub and community gathering space, a place where people can engage in activities, sports, and events, a place that is full of people doing things together
- Natural Areas are Protected: Tikishla Park's natural areas serve important ecosystem functions and are highly valued as undeveloped wild spaces in a city that is becoming increasingly more urban

What issues or concerns would you like to see addressed through this planning effort?

1. Safety
 - Several survey respondents indicated that they are not visiting the park because of safety concerns
 - Drug activity in/around the Tikishla parking lot
 - Possible solutions: better visibility, APD patrols, reconfigure parking lot
 - Homeless camps (30 + comments) => primary concern is petty theft, drug use, safety
 - Trail safety: poor visibility, no lights on spur trails
 - Community identified needs: Vegetation mgmt., Trail Lighting
2. Developed Facilities
 - Playground:
 - Equipment is outdated, scattered and "weirdly spaced" in three separate zones and is not conducive to supervising children, forest near playground can be scary
 - Hockey:
 - Attractive nuisance or asset worth expanding? Different perspectives and opinions on the rink – some want to add another ice rink for families while a few commented that the ice isn't being used
 - Ball fields:
 - Wide agreement that the ball fields at Tikishla are under-utilized => there is a desire for more flexible multi-use open green space
 - Amenities:
 - the park needs more/better amenities to support park use (mutt mits, trash cans, benches, restrooms, bike racks)
3. Trails
 - Cottonwood tree roots impacting trail surface
 - Upgrade spurs for better ADA access
 - Resurface bridges to eliminate dangerous slippery surface
 - Add lighting to improve safety

4. Natural Areas
 - Keep green, limit development, preserve natural areas
 - Remove invasive species (May Day trees)
 - No real consensus on whether to improve (i.e. harden) social trails or leave as-is?
5. Indoor Tennis Facility
 - Survey participants overwhelmingly wish to protect the existing natural areas and do not support the development of a large indoor tennis facility at Tikishla Park
6. Other
 - Community engagement - Residents have voiced that they would be willing to show up to volunteer events/community projects and park clean-ups

What types of improvements or new facilities would you like to see at Tikishla Park in the future?

List of new facilities identified in the survey:

- Community gardens
- Single track trails pump track
- Off-leash dog park
- Picnic area/pavilion
- Volleyball
- Outdoor ping pong table
- Skate park
- Permanent restrooms
- Bike repair station
- Disc golf (3 hole practice course)
- Outdoor tennis court
- Open space (i.e. soccer field)
- Wayfinding signs
- Adult exercise equipment
- Parkour
- Camper host
- BBQ
- More events/food trucks

Tikishla Park (E 20th):

- Hockey
 - Warming hut
 - Second ice sheet for families
 - More lights
 - Benches for putting skates on
- Ball Fields
 - Better as open space/multi-use
 - "re-utilization of under-used Tikishla ball field"
 - Remove fences – one or both fields?
- Playground
 - Current location is scary and unorganized (spread over three locations)
 - Better equipment for 2-5. 5-12 (adult?)
 - Update playground equipment, possibility combine with future picnic area/pavilion or other complimentary facility
 - Future playground => size, how much of a destination should it be?
 - Pros: people activate the park with positive use, improving safety
 - Cons: more traffic

Trails:

- More lights
- Re-surface dangerous slick bridges
- Wayfinding
- Maintenance: grooming in winter, sweeping in spring

Natural Areas:

- Remove May Day trees
- Preserve natural areas
- Clean up homeless camps
- Some interest in formalizing social trails with potentially boardwalks in wetland areas?

Davenport Fields:

- Improve ADA access
- New playground equipment
- Complimentary uses that add value to Davenport
 - Programming & events
- Improve parking lot surfacing (pave/no pave?)
- Controlled vehicle circulation
- Lights
- American Legion sized ball field, 50/70 field, reconfigure to meet needs
- Secure snack shack

Discussion: The Master Plan

Following the review of comments and public input, the advisory group focused on specific use areas. Advisory group members were asked to provide direction to specific questions as they relate to use areas within the park. Advisory group member comments are recorded below.

1) Tikishla Park (E 20th Ave)

Members of the community generally like Tikishla Park much the way it is, and most individuals are not interested in major new facilities that may change the character of the park. However, some comments suggest that some new facilities should be added to create more diverse recreational opportunities.

1. What if any new facilities should be added to Tikishla Park?
2. What changes to Tikishla Park would make it function better?

BALL FIELDS: REMOVE FENCES

- If we want a baseball diamond, we can put that anywhere, "let's not be stuck with nested leftovers of a thing that no longer exists"
- "The ball field diamond shapes shouldn't predicate what we do with the park".
- The north area/field is where, as a neighborhood hub, you'd want more passive activities. Dogs should be further away. An "exceptional neighborhood zone" - include a playground,
- I haven't seen anyone playing on the south field, but yes on the north. Weekly pick-up game, kickball?
- Remove the fences and take everything out of there. Level it all out or replant it. The fence is pretty much obsolete. The baseball parks aren't needed there at all.
- City View Little League does not have plans to use the ball fields at Tikishla Park (E 20th) and is focused on Davenport Fields
- Consider leaving one fence, potentially for use as an off leash dog area.

OFF-LEASH DOG PARK

- From what I've seen is that... "once there are dogs there, the space becomes completely unusable." Examples given: University Lake, Davenport Fields - I think dogs and people should be separated.
- If you were going to enclose an area, the parameters of a baseball field might not be right but something out there for off leash dogs. Some semblance of a dog park.
- Is there really enough room for a legitimate dog park? (Steve: 3/4 acre is recommended minimum size for fenced off-leash area)
- In this neighborhood, you're not going to have people leashing their dogs.
- Dog park question - are these people driving up or walking? At Davenport Fields, its people who drive there, let their dogs loose, and that's what people do.
- If this is primarily a community park for the neighborhood - We don't want to draw people in like University Lake
- we don't want to have an official off-leash dog park because it will become a citywide attraction
- "A fenced dog park attracts responsible dog owners. Yes some people aren't responsible. But I pick up their poop."
- Nichols Park has been successful with flyball – could it be included in this planning effort
- If there are amenities such as trash receptacle, mutt mitts and signage - people are more likely to use it.

PLAYGROUND

- Playground could be more cohesive and less separated, possibly incorporated in with a picnic shelter and other complementary activities
- Biggest priority — fix the playground equipment for the older kids. I never see kids playing on it. (Steve - old playground burned down many times)
- "Let's get people to pay for things and have natural environment and none of this plastic steel ugly stuff" (example given of a playground in Homer, AK)
- "Let's separate the pre-school area from older one. In good playground planning you do that."
- I want more natural playground equipment.
- ADA/inclusive/accessible (distinction between ADA and "inclusive")

COMMUNITY GARDENS

- What about on the east side of the fields - people would come to the park and check on their tomatoes.
- Who would use it? Most people in this neighborhood have yards. (Steve – There is demand in the larger community for gardening space. If a garden went into the park, it would be used by the community)
- "ARC of Anchorage would use it."
- You can drive or bike to the garden
- There's water here, not true at other park. 20 plots instead of 45 that will be easier on the parking lot.

PARKING LOT

- Inefficient, poor design, hiding places => facilitates negative activities in the parking lot
- Steve - parking responds to demand. So if, for example, we put in another ice sheet or some other attractive use, then expanded parking should accompany that. Visibility issues can be addressed through expansion or redesign.

PAVILION/PICNIC SHELTER

- Some interest in a picnic shelter
- Can the parking lot handle additional traffic from picnic shelter rentals?
 - Concerns about the impacts on neighborhood streets, comparisons made to Sitka Street Park shelter
 - This issue doesn't necessarily apply because Airport Height neighborhood streets are public ROW and on-street parking is allowed

RESTROOMS

- Restrooms? Permanent facilities are ideal but port-a-potties are better than nothing and better than going in the woods
- I think port-a-potties at the parks are working really well, the wheelchair accessible ones are great. They tend to put them in a little late and pull them a little early.
- They just installed new permanent restroom facilities at King's Landing at the Bridge Restaurant, curious to see how they perform
 - "The bathrooms almost upstaged the rain garden there, they are really nice"

OTHER ACTIVITIES/USES

- People asked what that long strip east of the bike path and ball fields could be, and I'm thinking of uses like a bocce court, shuffleboard, etc. You could go meet people there. My girls when they ski, that loop is perfect for a 4 year old. Lots of ways to use that space.
- How can we incorporate concrete block buildings that are already there?
 - Climbing Walls?
- Question: Is there a desire for adult fitness equipment? A park with multi-generational activities?
 - Comments seemed to support a rock wall more than adult fitness equipment

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

- How is this funded? (Steve – Master Plan is a 20 year plan, no \$\$ on the table right now but strong community support and engagement in the process. Many options for implementation: volunteer projects, maintenance projects, private donations, public/private grants, municipal bonds, partnerships... etc.)
- Rob — the north field had actual dugouts, holes in the ground, 10 years ago we got them filled in because they are hubs for underage drinking (Steve—we removed them at Valley of the Moon this past summer for the same reason)

2) Natural Areas

Public input overwhelmingly favors preservation and protection of the natural areas within the park.

1. What if any improvements should be made in these areas?

NATURAL RESOURCE AREAS

- Public input favors little changes, preservation
- "phenomenal as is, gets used a lot"
- Inexpensive to maintain

3) Trails

Trails are a major transportation and recreation asset. Trails connect Tikishla Park to the neighborhood and destinations along the greenbelt. The Chester Creek Trail was recently re-surfaced; however, people feel that some trail improvements and upgrades are still needed.

1. What should the priorities be as they relate to trails? Consider both soft-surface and paved trails.

LIGHTING

- Lighting on trails is important, there are some places where lighting ends. Have to tell yourself "it's okay, someone is biking through..."
- Last time Geran talked about LEDs and lighting? (Steve: we're moving to LEDs, light pollution is much less of a concern with new trail lighting standards using LED's)
 - Rob - lights are much improved, we don't have as much light pollution... "on the north slope hunters asked us to create more light pollution after we switched to LED's because they use the light as a point of reference to get home"

SOFT-SURFACE TRAILS

- Soft Surface Trails: Are those trails people still walk on?
 - "Yeah. Increase in people biking on there now more than ever, even in winter"
 - biking trails, a pump park?
- 1997 master plan talked about hardening a trail along the base of the bluff here, is that still something of interest?
- Folks seem to be pretty happy with the trails
- (Steve - survey and online responses don't provide clear direction for soft-surface trails; some want trails to be hardened, some want trails upgraded to single-track trails; some want to leave the trails as is...)
- Opportunities for trails improvement projects with the Youth Employment in Parks (YEP) program
- "more trails, fewer homeless camps"... "I won't go there because of the homeless camps. I want more hardened trails. Fewer camp messes."

4) Davenport Fields

Note: Time did not permit a discussion of Davenport Fields. Steve will follow up with City View Little League to further discuss the organizations wants and needs for Davenport Fields.

Presentation: Indoor Tennis Facility

Les Sheppard and Tim Potter, Dowl Engineering, presented a proposal for an Indoor Tennis Facility which they would like to locate in Tikishla Park with access off of Northern Lights Blvd. Mr. Sheppard and Mr. Potter shared their vision for an indoor tennis facility as well as a map and "site selection location parameters" document which included six bullet points describing what they are looking for in a location.

Mr. Sheppard shared how he "went around looking for the best locations, and found this one. We considered how could it be done, would it be a detriment to the park? A safe zone. As everybody has acknowledged here, the more activity that you have in a park or a greenbelt, the safer it becomes. A "string of pearls," a park node, a facility node, you could access things that are cool to do along the way."

The advisory group asked questions and shared their sentiments on the proposed facility. In summary, advisory group members shared that an indoor tennis facility such as the one proposed by Mr. Sheppard and Mr. Potter is not supported by the community at this location and that other locations outside the park would be more suitable.

Foundation: In honor of Mr. Sheppard's wife.

Goal: The creation of an indoor tennis facility to promote and support tennis in Anchorage through the development of a facility that is accessible to all abilities, all ages, and all financial means.

Size: Approximately 5 acres; 8-10 indoor courts, 8 outdoor courts

Choice of this location from "Site Selection Location Parameters" document:

- 5.0 +/- acres in size
- Central but skewed to Northeast to be easier to get to by higher percentage of residents that do not own a vehicle
- Accessible by alternate modes of transportation including, pedestrian, bicycle, transit, personal vehicle. Should be proximate to major trail corridors, transit routes and arterial roads
- Located for synergy with other uses and programs, such as; university campuses for students, staff and employees; Hospital and Medical services staff, employees, physical rehabilitation, healthy choices programs; Public Safety, close proximity to major trail system could allow the facility to be a "safe place" along trail, additional location for trail watch volunteers to stage out of.
- Reasonably good soils and suitable basic infrastructure (water, sewer, electric, gas, telecommunication) available to the site.
- Compatible with adjacent uses.

Cost: No cost to the city to develop, will be operated by the foundation, fees?

Site Selection Process. Mr. Sheppard and Mr. Potter presented this concept to the Anchorage Assembly on November 1st and requested permission from the Assembly to conduct an official site selection study. The site selection process is outlined in MOA

Code of Ordinances 21.03.140 and is the same process that is used for identifying locations for Fire stations and schools.

DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS

- Edith: "What is the footprint?"
 - Ed: "All the uplands."
- Jonny: "What draws you to this location?" "I understand it's an epicenter. But what besides the circle on the map?" "What were the metrics?"
 - Les: "I took into account all the locations, and... it's close to the bike trails and all the things... the soils. I've talked to a lot of business people in town. Les, you got a good project. Some people won't think that."
- Les: "kids don't start play tennis until the 9th grade because they don't have a place to play indoors"

- Les is asking "what's the best location for a tennis center?"
- This group is asking "what's the best use for the land in our neighborhood?"

- Ed: Question regarding DOT access road off of Northern Lights
 - Les: "I've covered all these topics"
- Ed: "I've been to so many meetings with you, you need to hear when someone says no." "Put it in Fairview, if you want to serve lower income people, if that's your thing."
 - Carolyn/Ed: "I want to see you succeed, but in this neighborhood, we're going to fight you. This park is not the place for you to put it"
- Heather: (question for Steve) "How can a member of the public go to the Assembly and not through the Parks Department and target our park and ... where does the Parks Department sit on this and find a space that is accommodating to everyone?"
- Steve: "the Tikishla Park Master Planning process is largely in response to the Rogers Park and Airport Heights Community Council(s) request to formalize the community's position on the proposed indoor tennis facility"... "Additionally, it has been twenty years since the last master plan was approved and it is time for an update"... "As for the approval process, the park master plan will go before the community council for a resolution of support as well as public hearings at the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission."... "The site selection process was a result of Mr. Sheppard and Mr. Potter asking the Assembly"... "This tennis facility is not a priority for the administration right now, which is focused on other priorities such as public safety and homelessness among other things".
 - Tim: "we have been told this is not a priority for the administration - police and homelessness are it. They are not going to spend a dime. I didn't know we were on the agenda tonight, I thought we were just going to listen to the neighbors."
 - Kyle: "so at the assembly, were they just placating you?"
 - Tim: "Bill Starr will be off the assembly soon." "Maybe oil prices will go up?" "Maybe Les will decide to do a scholarship program for underprivileged kids"
 - Kyle: "the numbers didn't pan out when Sullivan tried to build this"
- Tim: "just to be fair to, I think, everybody, Les started this a couple of years ago. He's been working along and working along. We've met with John (Rodda) and yourself (Steve), and we can see the handwriting on the wall. The community is trying to preserve this space as a natural area. Whether I agree and think that's

the best use, I'm not sure that long-term we shouldn't leave flexibility for something to go in there. In time, the community may look at something different. But, when you close the door on things, you can shut it most of the way but it is good to have a little flexibility, and that might scare you because someone might kick the door in".

- Ed: the only way I can see a lack of options, for the door to be actually closed? Is when it's paved.
- Tim: comment about the "center of our circle"
 - Ed: "why is that the center of your circle? There's too much traffic, accidents, how can this be an added..." "Do you know why they closed the access to Goose Lake from Northern Lights... because of the location of a dangerous intersection... traffic accidents and fatalities"
- Tim: "think about... a tennis facility is a volume of air building with very few people taking up the space in the building."
- Kyle: "have you gone to DOT? Are they supportive?"
 - Tim: "traffic analysis — yes. We have talked to DOT. We have not done the Traffic Impact analysis."
- Tim: asks about Goose Lake?
 - Ed: (thumbs up motion)
 - Heather: "it already has parking"
 - Jonny: "it already has utilities"
- Les: "We are not going to build it all at once. But I need a piece of property first. And then fundraising. No bond money." "We got military, we got Boniface, they got schools, they can start learning how to play tennis, and when you get the kids, you get mom and dads, we're not going to build this and have the moms and dads drive away..."
- Tim: "if there could be consideration that you understand the need to have a beneficial project like this in a fairly centrally located area ... and the U-Med district can stay a key hub? Go ahead and say no but it's a worthy thing."
- Les: "let me say one more thing ... I've heard people in that subdivision complaining about Goose Lake in the summer, too much noise... okay, it will be energy efficient"
- Steve: thank you and closing remarks...