



Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska
Parks & Recreation Department

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M e m o r a n d u m

Date: January 10, 2013

To: Parks & Recreation Commission

Cc: Holly Spoth-Torres, Parks Superintendent

From: Mark McCaffery, Park Planner

PRC 2013-03: Enclosed Dog Park Space at Arctic

Project: Benson Park

Introduction

Arctic Benson Park is a two-acre neighborhood park located at 31st Avenue and Arctic Boulevard in the Midtown area. The park currently features play equipment for 2 – 5 and 5 – 12 year olds, an open play field, and on-street parking for approximately 20 – 25 vehicles.

Planning and Public Involvement

Community members who participated in the 2011 Neighborhood Parks Report Card noted that unwarranted activity has contributed to a deteriorating park atmosphere that negatively affects the park's existing uses. The park has experienced criminal incidents causing park users to feel unsafe and unwelcome.

An enclosed dog park was suggested as a means to attract more people to the park and activate the site with a positive use. Members of the Midtown Community Council engaged neighbors and local businesses in proximity to the park and a resolution in support of an enclosed dog park space at Arctic Benson Park was passed by the Council in 2011.

Arctic Benson Park is one of the seven Neighborhood Park Fix-it projects for 2013. The park's VIP Committee prioritized the installation of a fence for an enclosed dog park space with available funding. The Committee plans to pursue additional funding through an Anchorage Park Foundation Challenge Grant to improve park safety and existing uses with lighting and new playground equipment.

Project Details

- 5' chain link fence in the western section of the park.
- Double gate entry system to allow park users and their dogs to enter and exit separately and unleash their dog in an enclosed area. Location of double gate entry system will be centered for equidistant access from on-street parking areas.
- 12' wide barn gates will be installed to allow Parks Maintenance to routinely access the off-leash area. Barn gates will be locked at all times.
- Dog park rules sign, dog station and trash bin installed at double gate entry
- Park benches within enclosed off-leash area

Schedule

- RFQ for fencing contractor – *April*
- Fence construction – *Beginning May 15th*
- Amenities installed – *June*
- Volunteer fix-it day – *July 27th*

Existing Dog Parks

There are five designated off leash dog park spaces within the Municipal park system:

- Connors Lake Park
- Far North Bicentennial Park
- Russian Jack Springs Park
- South Anchorage Sports Park
- University Lake Park

No dog parks are located within the Midtown or Downtown areas. There are currently no dog park spaces that are enclosed by a fence. All dog park spaces join or overlap other park uses. Parks with off-leash dog areas receive routine maintenance similar to other parks, but are sometimes supplemented through volunteer efforts. University Lake Park receives additional support from a local dog user group that replaces mutt-mitt bags and removes trash from bins located in certain areas of the park.

The size and parking capacity for the off-leash areas varies considerably. The five existing off-leash areas are much larger than the proposed area at Arctic Benson. Russian Jack Springs Park and South Anchorage Sports Park provide off-street parking areas that accommodate multiple destination activities, making it difficult to recommend a necessary number of spaces for Arctic Benson.

Park users bring their dogs to recreate in many Municipal parks, not just off-leash areas. While Parks & Recreation does not endorse off-leash activity in undesignated areas, it has been observed that park users populate fenced-in areas such as ball fields to engage their dogs in off-leash recreation.

Staff Recommendation

Level of service standards identified in the Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource and Recreation Facility Plan project the need for seven dog park spaces in the Municipal park system by 2020. The five current dog park spaces have acreage and parking to attract users throughout Anchorage. Observed repurposing of baseball fields for off-leash activity by park users demonstrates a need for additional enclosed areas that have amenities to support off-leash use. The objective of the enclosed dog park at Arctic Benson Park is to add a neighborhood amenity that may restore a positive use pattern to this Midtown park.

Research of established dog park criteria and review of Parks & Recreation's existing dog park inventory infer that the additional use can be accommodated by this neighborhood park with the existing on-street parking capacity of 20 – 25 spaces. The dog park space as currently designed will allow Park Maintenance to adequately access and maintain the facility.

The Department believes that the plan to add an enclosed dog park space at Arctic Benson Park is consistent with objectives identified in the Park Plan and supports the public process undertaken to develop the plan. The Department recommends that the Parks & Recreation Commission pass the proposed resolution to support an enclosed dog park space at Arctic Benson Park.

Attachments

- 2011 Neighborhood Parks Report Card – Arctic Benson Park
- Midtown Community Council Resolution – 2011
- Enclosed Dog Park Fence Layout
- University Lake Off-Leash Dog Area Rules Sign
- Designated Dog Parks Map
- Parking Considerations for Off-Leash Dog Park Spaces in Anchorage

Anchorage Park Foundation 2011

AnchorageParkFoundation.org

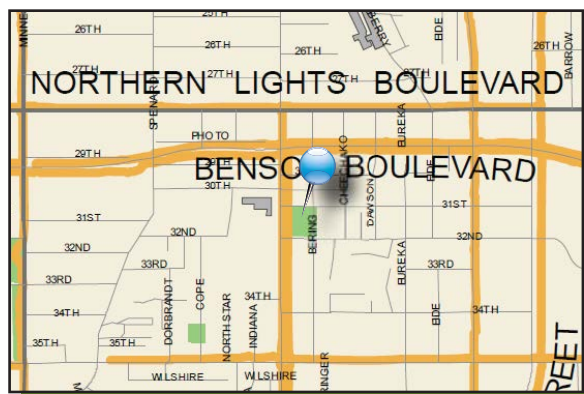


Arctic/Benson Park

750 W. 31st Avenue

Park History

This property was offered for sale in 1977 for a park site, and in April 1981 the Municipality of Anchorage purchased the land. The owners sold the property at below the appraisal value, which gave the Parks & Recreation Department funding to develop it. This park was the location for the kick-off party held for the City of Lights program in 1996. They continue to light this park every fall.

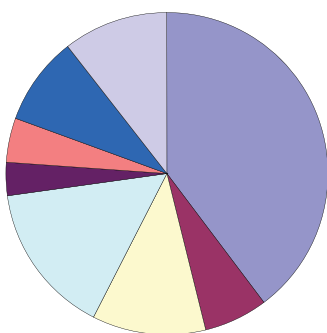


Neighborhood Statistics*

Population: 4,194

Percent of Population under age 18: 20.3%

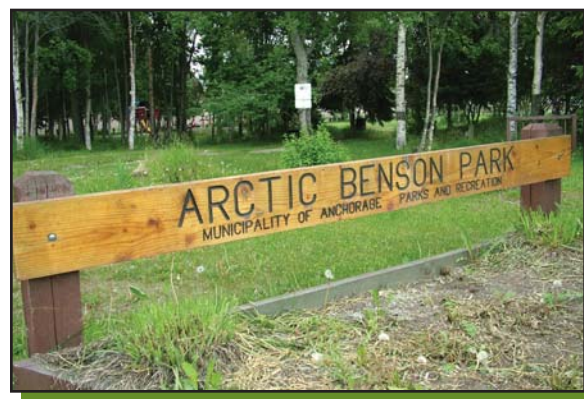
Ethnic Composition:



*2010 Census Data

Park Facilities & Equipment

- Play equipment for 2 to 5 year olds
- Picnic tables
- Large open play field
- Volunteer-maintained flower bed
- On street parking



COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES:

Mayor Dan Sullivan
mayor@muni.org

Midtown Community Council
Don Pohland, President
donp@jlproperties.com

Assembly District 4
Dick Traini - trainid@muni.org
Elvi Gray-Jackson - gray-jackson@muni.org

Alaska State Legislative District 25M
Representative Mike Doogan
Representative_Mike_Doogan@legis.state.ak.us
Senator Hollis French
Senator_Hollis_French@legis.state.ak.us



REPORT CARD ON PARKS: Arctic Benson 2011

Report Card Background

The Anchorage Parks Report Card utilized community volunteers to create a comprehensive picture of the condition of our parks, reflecting the Anchorage community's opinions, preferences and ideas. Anchorage citizens along with Anchorage Parks and Recreation staff evaluated 38 parks based on 6 different settings. Parks were surveyed based on cleanliness, safety, structure, appearance, and function. Anchorage Parks and Recreation staff will use this information to strategically employ its funding and volunteer resources to better meet the needs of the Anchorage community.

OVERALL GRADE

F

Active Recreation Areas

39

Green Spaces

39

Park Entry

41

Passive Recreation Areas

35

Pathways

36

Playgrounds

40

Scores were calculated on a 100 point scale

Arctic Benson Findings

Community members reported that Arctic Benson Park has a lot of potential and that they would bring their families there if the homeless issue could be solved. Currently they feel it is terribly unsafe and being overtaken by drugs, alcohol, prostitution, and people living there. They are very concerned about the inappropriate activities occurring in the park both during the day and at night, contributing to litter, unpleasant odors from human waste, and generally making the park an unwelcoming and scary place. The playground is old and abandoned due to intimidating adult activity in the area.

Fix It List

- Re-paint equipment, install engineered wood fiber, and new equipment
- Create a destination enclosed dog-park to bring more people to the park
- Bring back lighting. Install light posts and security cameras
- Install a lighted basketball court
- Plant flowers in beds
- Prune trees for better visibility
- Remove "hiding places" in trees and shrubs, or remove bushes altogether near entrance to increase visibility
- Install a fence as safety barrier to dangerously fast Arctic Blvd traffic and for dog park



The playground needs repair and replacements



The tire of the tire swing needs replacement

For a complete directory of Report Card results for neighborhood parks, go to www.AnchorageParkFoundation.org/projects/reportcard.htm

The Anchorage Park Foundation developed the Anchorage Parks Report Card in partnership with the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands at Indiana University, and community volunteers, thanks to a generous grant from the Rasmuson Foundation. The APF has raised over \$18 million dollars since 2004 to improve public parks, trail and recreation areas. To make a contribution or volunteer, please visit us at:

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF AN ENCLOSED DOG PARK AT ARCTIC BENSON PARK

WHEREAS the increased crime problem in the park has endangered the lives of Midtown residents and

WHEREAS the residents of Midtown recognize that the park would be less appealing to the criminal element if more residents used the park and

WHEREAS residents are afraid to use the park because of the criminal element and

WHEREAS many residents, particularly older residents, own dogs and would like to have their dogs off-leash at the park and

WHEREAS an enclosed section of the park for use by dog owners would provide a safer environment for residents who wish to enjoy the park and

WHEREAS the additional social aspect of dog owners congregating in the park would dissuade unsavory elements from occupying the park and provide residents a greater level of safety through social networking

THEREFORE let it be resolved that the Midtown Community Council is in support for a reasonable portion of Arctic Benson Park to be reassigned for dedicated use as an enclosed dog park.

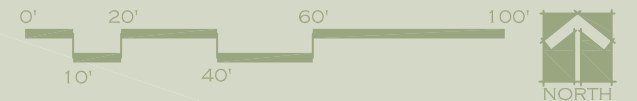
Dee Red



Anchorage Parks & Recreation

Arctic/Benson Park

750 W. 31st Avenue
Anchorage Alaska 99503



Scale: 1" = 20' - 0" @ 22" x 34"

Date: 12-11-2012

Drawn By: TJ Checked By: SC

Conceptual Plan 1 of 1

Welcome to this Anchorage municipal park.
This park is for the enjoyment of all.

University Lake Off-Leash Dog Area

To make sure everyone has a safe, healthy park visit, please follow these rules:

- Dogs must be leashed upon entering and leaving the off-leash dog park space.
- Owners or custodians are responsible for all actions of their dogs.
- Classified dogs and female dogs in heat are prohibited.
- Dog feces must be cleaned up by the dog owner or custodian.
- Holes dug by dogs must be filled by the dog owner or custodian.
- The owner or custodian of the dog must remain in the dog park space with the dog.
- Dogs must be under control as defined by Anchorage Municipal Code Title 17.
- Dogs must be legally licensed and have a current rabies vaccination.
- Specific trails within the park may be closed to off-leash use on a seasonal basis. Such trails will be clearly posted.
- Contact the Animal Care & Control Center for enforcement of AMC Title 17 (Animals), including the investigation of dog bites and animal attacks: 343-8119.

Healthy Parks, Healthy People

Anchorage Unleashed - www.anchorageunleashed.org
Anchorage Parks and Recreation - www.muni.org/Parks
Twitter: @ANCgreenparks

Facebook: www.facebook.com/anchorageparks

Graffiti Busters
375-DONE

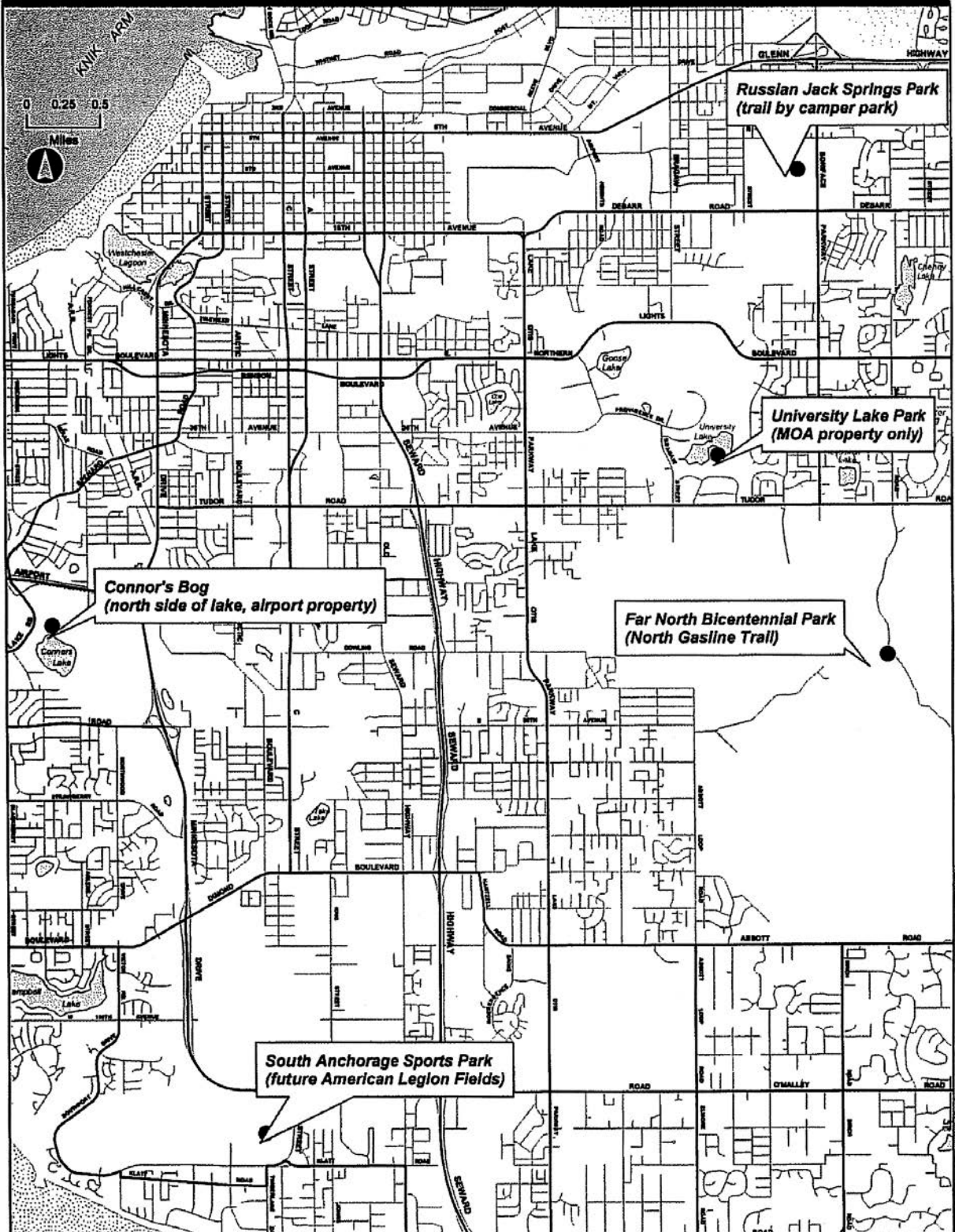
Adopt-A-Park
343-4288

Trail Watch
343-4492

Police non-emergency Line
786-8900



Off-Leash Dog Park Spaces



Parking Considerations for Off-Leash Dog Park Spaces in Anchorage

PARK NAME	PARK SIZE (ACRES)	APPROX. OFF-LEASH AREA (ACRES)	APPROX. PARKING SPACES*	PARKING SPACE(S) PER OFF-LEASH AREA ACRE	NOTES
Connors Lake Park	370	45	35	0.7	Indicates year round off-leash area. There are larger areas in the park that are available for skijoring, but do not permit off-leash activity on groomed trails during the winter.
Far North Bicentennial Park	4,010	2 Miles	24	n/a	Off-leash activity follows a 2-mile stretch of the gasline trail. Parking spaces serve North Bivouac and South Bivouac Trailheads
Russian Jack Springs Park	300	26	150	5.8	Parking spaces serve the Jean Cartee Softball Fields
South Anchorage Sports Park	65	7	100	14	Parking spaces serve American Legion ball field and soccer fields
University Lake Park	64	40	30	0.5	Considers 10 spaces of on-street parking at end of University Lake Drive
<i>Arctic Benson Park</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>All spaces are from on-street parking</i>

*Far North, Russian Jack, and South Anchorage Parks have several parking areas to accommodate multiple activities. Spaces noted above correspond to the parking areas nearest the off-leash dog park spaces.