

RUSSIAN JACK SPRINGS PARK

MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Advisory Group Meeting #1 Summary

Thursday, January 31, 2019

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Russian Jack Springs Park - Lidia Selkregg Chalet

Overview of the Master Plan

Anchorage Parks and Recreation is updating the master plan for Russian Jack Springs Park. The master plan will provide a framework for the management, maintenance, and development of facilities 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 community advisory group

The Russian Jack Springs Park master plan advisory group was formed to help guide Parks and Recreation in the development of the master plan update. Advisory group members represent a variety of community interests and user groups and is comprised of park neighbors, representatives from user groups, Parks and Recreation Commissioners, and local community council representatives.

The first advisory group meeting for the Russian Jack Springs Park master plan took place on January 31, 2019 at the Lidia Selkregg Chalet at Russian Jack Springs Park.

Attendance

Staff

Steve Rafuse – MOA Parks & Rec Project Manager

Van Le, AICP – R&M Consultants, Inc. – Planner & Public Involvement Lead

Mark Kimerer – Bettisworth North Architects and Planners – Landscape Architect

Advisory Group Members

Sherry Wright	RJCC
Gary Snyder	East High cross country coach
Kristi Wood	NECC
Carla McConnell	NECC/ANC Sports Association
Kendra Kloster	NECC/RJCC
Pat McDonald	Boys and Girls Club
Renea Miller	RJCC
Steve Cleary	Alaska Trails
Kristen Myers	Park Neighbor
Kevin Keeler	Park Neighbor
Mick Brogan	First Tee
Erin Kirkland	PRC/East ANC resident
Eric Milliken	PRC/East ANC resident
Dante Petri	Arctic Cyclecross

Guest

Bruce Elgin
Terry Cummings
Art Harmon

Meeting Summary

The meeting began at 6:00 PM with a welcome and introductions of the project team and advisory group members in attendance. Each person described their interest and relationship to Russian Jack Springs Park, what they hope to accomplish with this process, and one or two things that they find special about Russian Jack Springs Park.

Following introductions, project consultant Van Le gave an overview of the agenda, role of the advisory group, and ground rules for productive meeting. Next, Steve Rafuse from Anchorage Parks and Recreation gave a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation outlined the goals of the master plan, provided an outline of the planning and public involvement process, illustrated the park's unique natural resources, used aerial images to describe the history of park development, provided a visual photo tour of park, illustrated access and connections, and showed areawide parks and recreation facilities for context and reference. The presentation provided the advisory group with background information to ensure that all participants had a shared understanding of the park's history and features.

Meeting Objective:

To establish a foundation for planning and public involvement by working with the advisory group to begin the process of identifying issues to be addressed, community and user group needs, potential future management and development priorities for consideration in the master plan update.

Following the presentation, Van Le led a group discussion, asking advisory group members to discuss issues to be addressed in this master plan as well as what they envision for the future of the park. The discussion was productive and respectful, with each member of the advisory group contributing to the discussion. Towards the end of the discussion, Steve Rafuse provided a review of items identified in the previous master plan which have not been developed and had not come up during the group discussion. At the end of the meeting, Steve Rafuse outlined the next steps and thanked advisory group members for participating.

Discussion Comments

Below is a summary of comments expressed during the group discussion. Comments are organized by topic or general theme.

General Comments

- Recognition of Dena'ina people and land as part of history of Russian Jack Springs Park
- Include "Russian Jack School Park" (park property adjacent to Russian Jack Elementary School and in the southwest corner of RJSP) as part of this Master Plan process
 - 3 parcels SW of park
- "re-energize the park through responsible development"
- Planning and future action should focus on the utilization of the park
- RJSP is a great resource for east Anchorage
- Consider east Anchorage demographics when discussing types of recreation facilities
 - Example of large Polynesian community in east Anchorage and the popularity of volleyball and picnic facilities such as at Valley of the Moon Park
- Lots of kids live in the area around the park – consider their needs in planning
- Play area – consider replacing the wood chips with something similar to Chanshtnu Muldoon Park (turf)
- Improve day-to-day maintenance as well as deferred maintenance of the park
- The north and south sections of the park have a "very different feel"

Amenities

- Port-o-potties at playground are in bad shape “gross” and could be improved
- More permanent restrooms are needed to serve the playground, softball uses
- Picnic area could be expanded to accommodate more tables
- Potable water to provide services at playground area would be a nice improvement
- Learning lab is a neat feature designed by Nunaka Valley Elementary school as a project

Safety

- Various opinions on the general feeling of safety in the park, some feel the park is safe while others less so
- People often get lost in the park – Improve wayfinding throughout park
- Illegal camps in the woods between the soccer fields and play area
 - Needs vegetation management - brush clearing and tree limbing
- Remove or improve old facilities (picnic, camping, and girl scout camp areas)
- Address issues of dumping and illegal activity along 20th Ave along south RJSP boundary
- Hidden parking areas (such as Boniface Pkwy lot + E 20th) attract negative/illegal activity
- Southern access (E 20th) points need lighting

Access

- Improved pedestrian crossings along Pine Street near the play area are needed
- South RJSP boundary/20th Ave
 - A lot of foot traffic along Wesleyan/20th Ave/Park
 - Better defined access points are needed into the park from 20th Ave
 - YEP trail built a few years ago was an improvement but more is needed
 - Dumping is a problem (vehicles, large appliances, miscellaneous items, garbage)
 - Street upgrades are needed
 - Currently E 20th Ave is chip-seal
 - No developed drainage facilities, no lighting, no sidewalks
 - Minimally developed or poor access points into the park
 - No formalized parking areas
 - Some homes on E 20th Ave do not have city services and are on well and septic
 - Dead end (east end of 20th Ave) appears to be an old roadway and is not maintained and attracts dumping and other undesirable activities
 - Note: plat maps show this area as Right-of-Way (ROW), under the jurisdiction of MOA Traffic and Street Maintenance
 - CPTED to address issues along 20th Ave
- Chalet Parking
 - Chalet parking for school races – emergency vehicles cannot access the parking lot when school buses are parked
- Boniface side walk improvements – status of DOT study a few years back
- Park is more than a destination: people use RJSP as a transportation route because of the lack of pedestrian facilities outside the park – example Boniface Parkway.

Underused Facilities

- Some of the old facilities haven't been used in decades and should get taken out
 - Areas cited:
 - Old picnic shelter area (bathroom facilities and pavement)
 - Girls scout camp area
 - Old Lions Club campground
 - Random asphalt parking pads and other old roads

Trails

- "People love the character of the trails but feel they need upgrades"
- Trail Upgrades
 - Wayfinding is needed to help people navigate the park
 - Multi-use trails need to be upgraded
 - Re-paved, soft shoulders added, lighting where needed
 - More lighting is needed
 - North RJSP multi-use trail is incomplete
- Trail System Hierarchy
 - "There are a lot of trails to nowhere" - trail hierarchy and definition is needed
- Cross country trails
 - XC trails were really popular in the 1990's, lots of races at the park
 - Great trails, but need some attention...
 - Classic only" in North RJSP are "largely forgotten about"
 - Many soft surface/ski trails tend to be "rooty"
 - Trail hierarchy/definition is needed
 - Define primary trails, upgrade + maintain them, and eliminate extraneous network of social trails
 - Off-season maintenance of ski trails
 - Eliminate sharp turns
 - Address overgrown trails with roots
 - Brush back trails for improved visibility
- Bridges need upgrades
 - Surfacing can be slippery
 - On lighted loop in the south part of the park are not constructed to support a piston bully for grooming
- Consider a paved multi-use trail and 2nd tunnel under Debar Rd to provide a multi-use trail loop within the park (as identified in previous master plan)

Soccer Fields

- Access to the fields is difficult
 - Boys and Girls Club has a cooperative agreement with PRD to maintain the fields for practice and games
 - Combination of bollards and boulders prevent large field maintenance equipment from easily accessing the soccer fields
 - A gate may provide a better solution
 - Access road to far field needs improvement (too narrow)

Golf

- Provides golf facilities on the east side of Anchorage
- Relatively short summer golf season
- Approximately 2300 rounds of golf were played in 2018
- First Tee program introduces youth to the game of golf
- Improvements made to greens and tees several years ago

Natural Resources

- Russian Jack spring is a unique asset to the park and city
 - Public knowledge of the spring is somewhat limited
 - Access to the spring is currently via an undeveloped social trail(s)
 - Question to consider in the future is: What is the appropriate recognition of the spring as a unique natural feature?

- Some type of more formal access - Soft surface trail with educational/interpretive information?
 - Leave it alone – no formal access, but social trails remains?
 - Learning Lab?
 - Some believe that the spring is designated as the City's emergency source of water in the case of a major natural disaster (note: unconfirmed)
- Clean up the downed trees from the wind storm
 - A forest management plan might be needed

Visioning

- Matching the attributes of the landscape to the character of recreation
- "pretty cool as-is" but with "more upkeep"
- "for all people to feel safe in the park"
- "more people in the park"
 - Example given of the positive change in Kincaid Park over the past 10 years (investment + increased park use) and how the same transformation is possible at RJSP
- Activities and specific uses drive parking needs – ensure that parking is sufficient for activities and uses - appropriately sized, and provides emergency and maintenance access
- Vision for the park: on a summer night, there is an array of activities where people are out in the park using the trails, picnicking, playing games such as volleyball. Everyone is out doing different things at the same time in the park.

Potential Improvements

- Paved Multi-use Trail and 2nd tunnel under Debar Rd would be a great addition
- Wayfinding is needed to help people navigate the park
- Community Center
 - Community Center identified in the 1998/2002 RJSP Master Plan
 - Muldoon and Mountain View Boys and Girls Club are far from Russian Jack area
 - Is there a community need in this part of East Anchorage?

Improvements identified in 1998/2002 RJSP Master Plan – not completed

- Proposed West RJSP Lighted Multi-Use Trail + Debar Rd. Tunnel
 - This is still a priority and should be discussed through this process
- Proposed Expansion/Reconfiguration of the Sledding Hill
 - Glad to see that people are using the sledding hill
 - Fix the sledding hill
 - Past discussions of improvements in the park (unrelated to the sledding hill) that proposed the removal of trees have prevented meaningful discussions of what is necessary to make the sledding hill safe for public use
- Proposed Court Sports Building (near Cartee Fields)
 - No comments
- Proposed Ice Rink
 - There is a surplus of outdoor ice available when considering school rinks that are currently unmaintained
 - Most hockey teams practice indoors, historically more teams used outdoor ice
- Proposed Maintenance Yard, Community Center, New Access Road (Pine Street), Picnic Shelter + Play Area (NW Corner of South RJSP)
 - Not sure of the current need for all these facilities

- Less interest in large development of this area, preference towards preservation of trees and forest management

Next Steps

- School Workshops throughout February
- Public Workshop #1 - Wednesday, February 27 from 6 to 8 pm
 - Location - Williwaw Elementary
- Online survey will be posted February 5th, 2019
- Next advisory group meeting in March