



Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska
Parks & Recreation Department

632 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 630
P.O. Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519
Tel 907-343-4355

URL www.muni.org/departments/parks



MEMORANDUM

Date: December 14, 2017

To: Parks & Recreation Commission

Cc: Joshua Durand, Parks Superintendent

From: Maeve Nevins, Park Planner

Project: **PRC 17-33: Wolverine Park Improvement: Schools on Trails/Challenge Grant Project**

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Schools on Trails Program Project Description

Anchorage parks and trails are well-loved and well-used by many of our residents. Yet many people are not aware of the parks, trails, waterways and natural areas in their own neighborhoods. More can be done to incorporate them into daily life, and especially into the lives of our children. With this in mind, the Anchorage Schools on Trails Program formed in 2014 around a vision of “engaging Anchorage schools with their nearby trails, parks, streams and natural habitats so that students and staff in those schools learn about community assets in their neighborhoods, and these neighborhoods are enriched by this increased local awareness.”

The Anchorage Schools on Trails Program (Schools on Trails), is currently working with students, school staff, community members, and professionals through a partnership with the Alaska Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) to collaboratively plan, design, and construct different projects with different schools throughout Anchorage.

Schools on Trails projects create opportunities for learning in a natural environment and attract children and families to the park during and after school. Moreover, these projects foster student/expert collaborations and provide career development and mentorship opportunities for professionals in the fields of science, design, education and resource management. In addition to serving as classrooms designed with student and educator input, these outdoor spaces will serve as community assets that improve public health through knowledge and awareness of the natural environment.

A consequent Schools on Trails goal is to encourage and educate students in the processes of government and advocacy. They will participate, collaborate, and present to community councils, stakeholders, park steering committees, design professionals and government officials, and the experience gained will empower them to be positive forces in their community—as contributors, stewards and leaders.

Campbell Elementary School Adoption and Educational Improvements at Wolverine Park

Campbell Elementary is a K-6 grade neighborhood school located less than a block from Wolverine Park. The park location provides a real-world opportunity for students and staff to engage in outdoor activities including nature walks, plant observations, and wildlife viewing. This year Campbell Elementary became the first Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) elementary school in Anchorage. We envision that Wolverine Park will become the site for much of the place-based learning that will engage students for years to come.

During the 2016/2017 school year, and the beginning of this school year the classes and the school's new STEM Club have spent considerable time at the park conducting observations, recording seasonal changes, mapping the park geography and assets, and observing resident wildlife, including moose and a variety of bird species. Landscape Architects have worked with students and teachers to understand the design process. Classes brainstormed possible improvements that would enhance community and school involvement in the park, and were feasible for them to implement. Ideas included birdhouses/nesting boxes, a space for outdoor learning, an improved path around the park, and informational and interpretive signs. Teachers and students worked with park and design professionals to create a concept plan to make Wolverine Park more accessible for educational opportunities, encourage community involvement, and to promote recreational activities. The students presented their designs to fellow students, park planners and the Park Foundation Schools on Trails coordinator.

FUNDING

In the spring of 2017 Campbell Elementary was awarded an Anchorage Parks Foundation Challenge Grant. The grant total is \$20,000. The team is required to match this grant through volunteer involvement and monetary donations. Therefore, the completed project will be valued at \$40,000 or more through a combination of the grant, donations, and volunteer time.

PLANNING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The students and teachers presented their design plans to the Taku/Campbell Community Council on Thursday, February 9, and with a more refined plan on October 12, 2017. The proposed improvements at Wolverine Park were supported by the Taku/Campbell Community Council at the Nov. 22, 2015 meeting (see attached resolution). Over the course of 2017 students, teachers, and design professionals have attended three community council meetings to provide updates on the project to the community. The Council was very supportive of the project. The project team plans to continue to update the community council as the project progresses.

2017/2018 IMPROVEMENTS

The teachers, staff, and students of Campbell Elementary have the goal to encourage and support recreational, educational, and community use of the park, while supporting indigenous flora and fauna with the following improvements:

- Bird Nesting Boxes
- Trail Improvements
- Educational and Wayfinding Signs
- Outdoor Learning Lab – Boulder Circle
- Outdoor Learning Lab – Improve Existing Picnic Shelter

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The proposed improvements at Wolverine Park are supported by the Taku/Campbell Community Council. The Department recommends that the Parks & Recreation Commission pass the proposed resolution to support the new playground as presented.

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDE:

Draft Wolverine Park Improvement Master Plan by Campbell Elementary
Draft Details of Improvements
Pictures of the process and project
Resolution of Approval by Taku/Campbell Community Council

Campbell Elementary School Place-Based Education in Wolverine Park

With the Anchorage Park Foundation (APF) and Schools on Trails (SoT) the students at Campbell Elementary are engaging in place-based learning in their neighborhood park. They have been visiting the park for lessons in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), as well as art and stewardship.

Park Exploration



Campbell
Elementary
School

Wolverine Park



Left top and above: Students and teachers go on a winter solstice walk through the park.

Left: Mrs. Wilcox's 2nd grade class pose in front of the Wolverine Park entry sign.



Discovery in Nature

Left top and bottom, and right top: Students engage in science education by looking for birds and habitat, and recording observations.

Bottom right: Students take a minute to relax and observe the tree canopy.

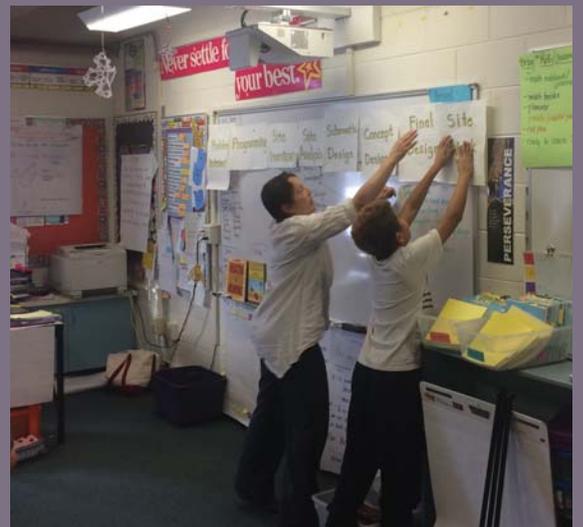
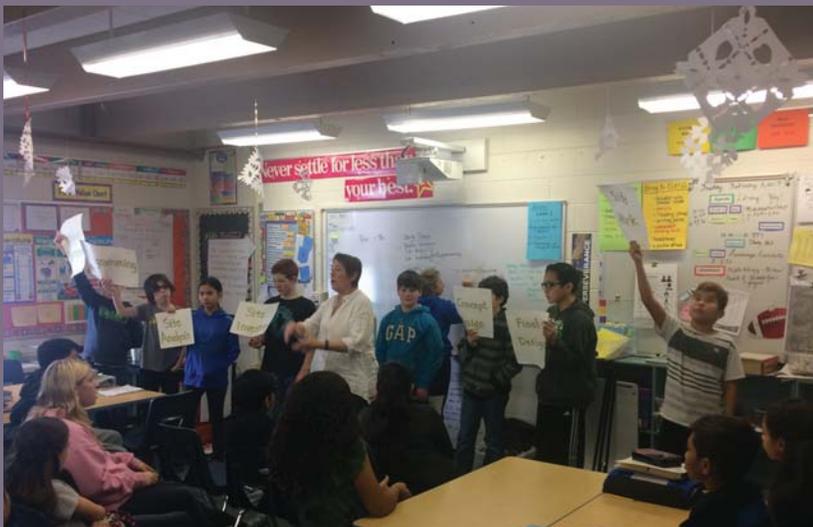
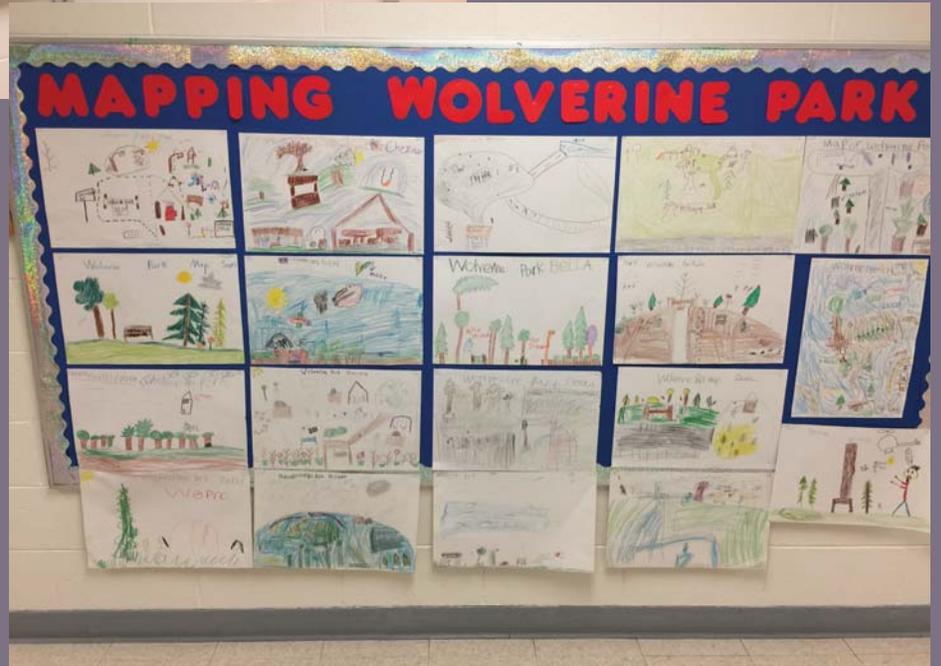
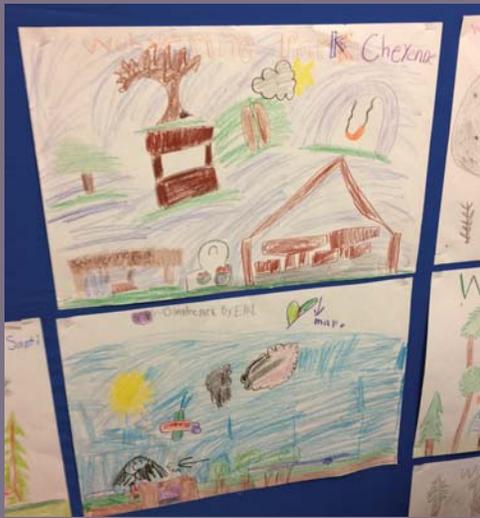


Design Process



Top three: Students conducted site visits and developed maps of the park. The 6th grade students even took on-site measurements to make scaled drawings.

Bottom two: Landscape architects, Elise Huggins and Brianne Keifer, have been working with the classes to develop designs for their park improvements. In the images below Elise Huggins teaches each step in the design process to Mrs. Gates' 6th graders.



Community Engagement

Right: Mrs. Wilcox and two of her second graders present their park ideas to the Taku/Campbell Community Council. The Council approved a resolution to support their project.

Bottom left: Sixth grade students and second grade students work in joint design teams to come up with park ideas.



Student Collaboration



Below: Students explore the park with Brendan Stuart and Laura Vachula of SoT and APF.



WOLVERINE PARK IMPROVEMENTS by: Campbell Elementary



PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

- 1** Bird Nesting Boxes
- 2** Trail Improvements
Campbell Elementary Nature Loop
- 3** Outdoor Learning Lab - I
Boulder Circle
- 4** Outdoor Learning Lab - II
New Tables
- 5** New Educational Signs &
Wayfinding Signs

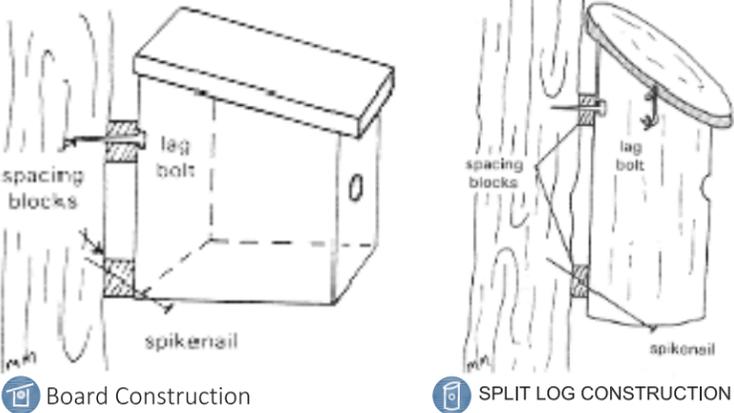
LEGEND

- Nature Trail - Walking Loop
- Improved Entry Trail
- Nesting Boxes - Board Construction
- Main Trail Improvements
- 1/4 Mile Walking Loop
- Nesting Boxes - Split Log Construction
- Revegetate Social Trails
- Educational Signs & Wayfinding Signs

WOLVERINE PARK IMPROVEMENTS by: Campbell Elementary

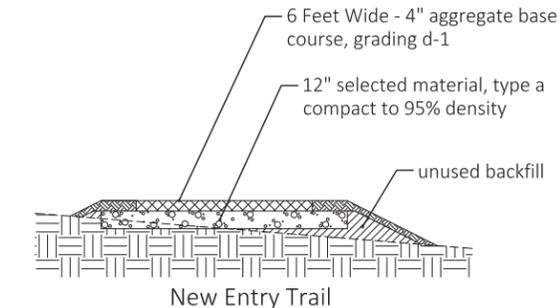
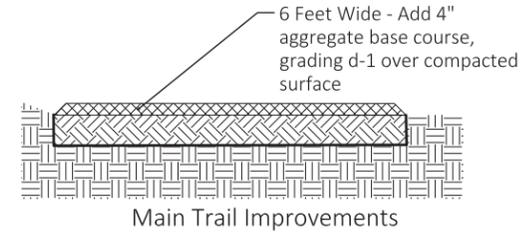
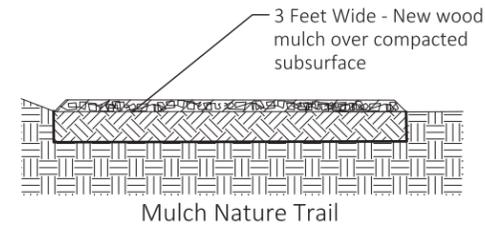
1 Bird Nesting Boxes

- Six bird nesting boxes
- Two different style of boxes (dependent on species)
- Located based on Alaska Department of Fish and Game recommendations
 - Hairy woodpecker
 - Downy woodpecker
 - Black-capped chickadee
 - Chestnut-backed chickadee
 - Boreal chickadee

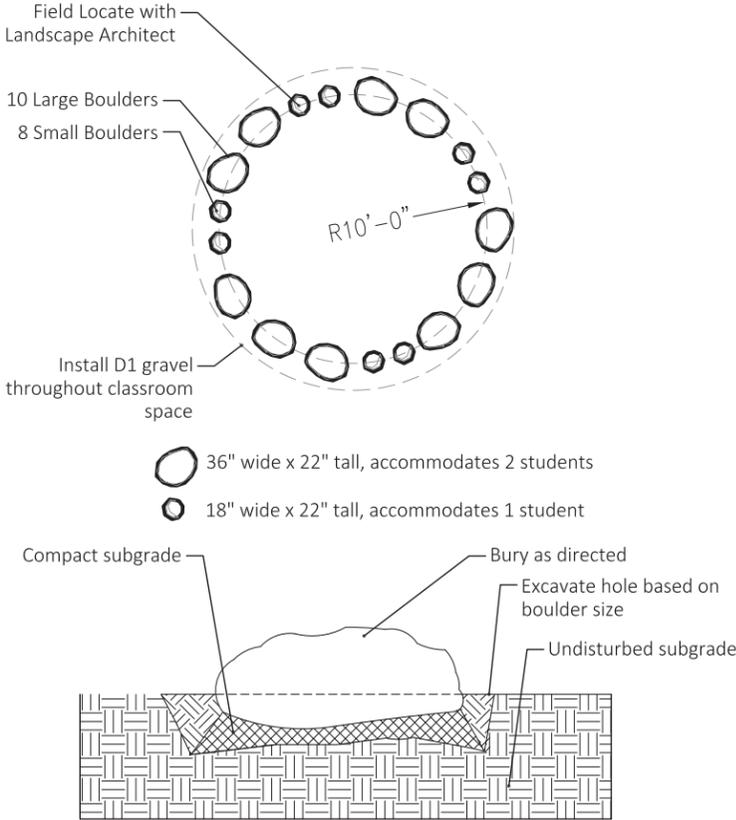


2 Trail Improvements

Potential Trail Types:

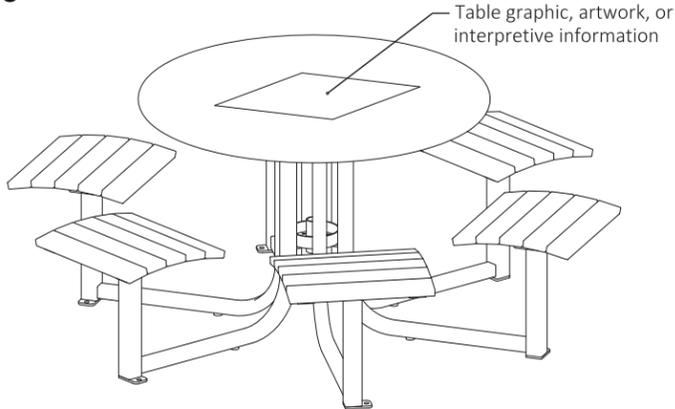
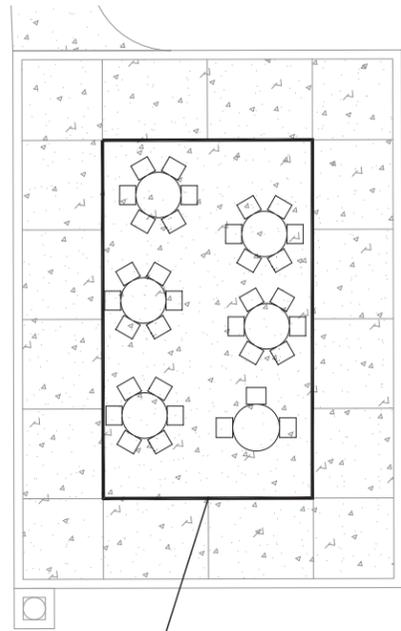


3 Outdoor Learning Lab - I: Boulder Circle



- Landscape Architect and Contractor to select boulders from quarry jointly.
- Boulders to be field located with Landscape Architect. Place 18 to 24 inches apart. Boulders shall be no more than 14" height above ground. Bury boulders as required to set firmly into the ground.
- Do not damage vegetation including groundcovers, grasses, trees and shrubs. All disturbed soil shall be seeded, mulched or covered with D1 gravel.

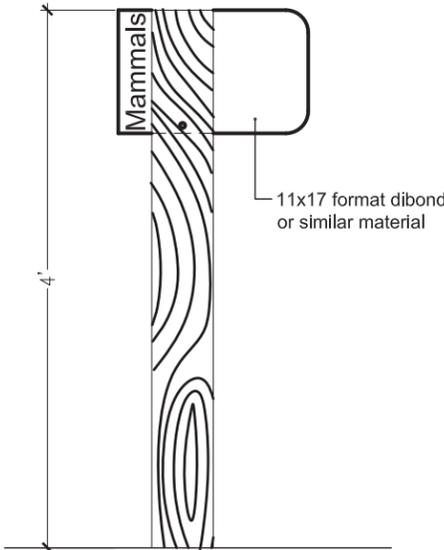
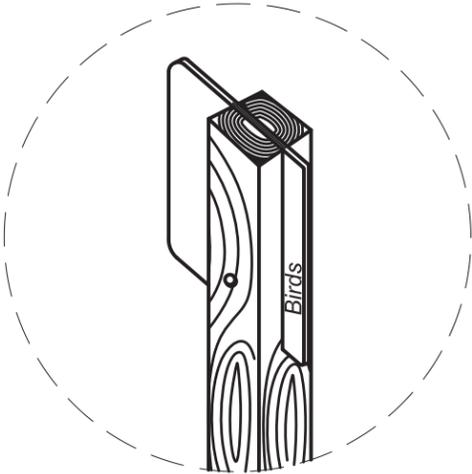
4 Outdoor Learning Lab - II: New Tables



- Use the covered pavilion as a weather protected teaching space.
- New round tables allow better group discussion, smooth surface is better to work on. (Thomas steele tables, style: ashton courtyard)
- Easily seats 34 (including 1 wheelchair).
- Adds color and could provide place for more interpretive info with table graphic.

5 New Educational & Wayfinding Signs *

- Simple sign posts that allow easily interchange signs with matching posts that work as trail markers
- Sign content could include:
 - welcome signs with map of the walking loop
 - wayfinding signs
 - mammals
 - birds
 - vegetation
 - park history



Taku/Campbell Community Council

Resolution Number 2017-20

WHEREAS, the teachers, staff, and students of Campbell Elementary have the goal to encourage and support recreational, educational, and community use of the park, while supporting indigenous flora and fauna;

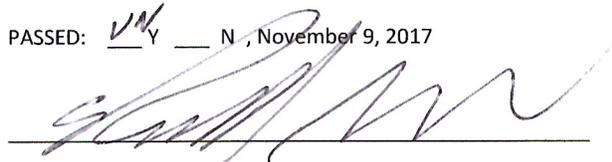
WHEREAS, the teachers, staff, and students of Campbell Elementary and community volunteers as part of the Anchorage Park Foundation Schools on Trails project teaming with the Alaska Chapter American Society of Landscape Architects worked together to design and install proposed improvements to Wolverine Park;

WHEREAS, the improvements include: plantings, bird nesting boxes, a boulder sitting area, new tables under the picnic shelter, improvements to existing social trails, new trails, and new signage;

WHEREAS, the proposed improvements require little to no additional maintenance and will continue to be maintained by the school and by MOA Parks;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Taku/Campbell Community Council supports the proposed improvements at Wolverine Park by the teachers, staff, and students of Campbell Elementary and community volunteers.

PASSED: Y N , November 9, 2017



Ron Jordan, President, Taku/Campbell Community Council



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PRC RES NO. 2017-21
Wolverine Park Improvements by Campbell Elementary

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission serves in an advisory capacity to both the Mayor and the Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission has the responsibility and duty to provide for the long term vision of our park system by ensuring that a balance of parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities provides for the health, welfare, and safety of all residents of the Anchorage Bowl; and

WHEREAS, the teachers, staff, and students of Campbell Elementary have the goal to encourage and support recreational, educational, and community use of the park while supporting indigenous flora and fauna;

WHEREAS, the teachers, staff, and students of Campbell Elementary and community volunteers as a part of the Anchorage Park Foundation Schools on Trails project teaming with the Alaska Chapter American Society of Landscape Architects are working together to design and install proposed improvements to Wolverine Park;

WHEREAS, the improvements include: plantings, bird nesting boxes, a boulder sitting area, improvements to picnic shelter, improvements to existing social trails, new trails, and new signage;

WHEREAS, the proposed improvements require little to no additional maintenance and will continue to be maintained by the school and MOA Parks;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission approves the proposed improvements at Wolverine Park.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 14th day of December, 2017.

Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

John Rodda, Director
Parks & Recreation Department