

Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan



April 2006
AO 2005-122

Municipality of Anchorage
Planning Department
&
Parks and Recreation Department



Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan

Final

April 2006

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Prepared by
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for the
Municipality of Anchorage
Planning Department
and
Parks and Recreation Department

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Dear fellow Anchorage resident:

Our city is blessed by its location and the spirit of its people. As mayor, lifelong Anchorage resident, and father of a young son, I am a regular user of our park system. Like you, I love our parks, trails, streams, natural areas, and mountains. We draw our identity and community spirit from these memorable places.

Anchorage Bowl residents have an experience of city life in the wilderness that few other American metropolitan areas can match. Anchorage has over 10,000 acres of municipal parkland, 200 parks, and over 400 kilometers of trails and greenbelts that link neighborhoods with surrounding natural open space and wildlife habitat. The city is blessed with large expanses of natural open space within its boundaries and is surrounded by Chugach State Park and the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge.

By 2020, up to 50,000 new residents will live in Anchorage. Our park system will be challenged to keep pace with this growth. Every young person in our city deserves to grow up near a neighborhood park, close to a playground and ball field with opportunities for after-school programs, sports, swimming, skiing and the enjoyment of nature. We must demonstrate our commitment to them by protecting and providing the public spaces and programs needed for their growth.

This is why we are pleased to submit the final Parks, Natural Resource and Recreation Facility Plan. The Plan provides a range of development options for the next 20 years based on our community's willingness and ability to fund new initiatives. The plan is intended as a trail map, providing broad policies for where new parks and facilities should be developed and how to take care of our existing facilities. Most importantly the Plan provides a measurable and defensible process to acquire, develop and manage the parks, natural resource and recreation facilities in the Anchorage Bowl.



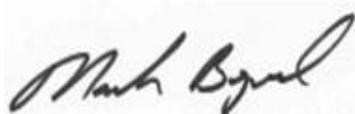
As a community leader, I have learned that talking about a problem is not solving it. The Plan is intended to be used as a catalyst for improving the park system to meet our growing community needs. Three years ago we started this process by meeting with the public and the many partners who help provide recreation opportunities to our city. The results have led to the establishment of Park Districts with managers who are accessible to the public to implement such programs as the "Clean and Green and Safe & Secure" and to the Anchorage Park Foundation, which has raised more than \$1 million in the first year for park upgrades.

There are eight core themes in this report that will help make our park system stronger:

- Take better care of what we have;
- Build strong private-public partnerships;
- Use parks as community building blocks;
- Provide balanced services and facilities for all residents;
- Provide safe and convenient access and connections;
- Promote stewardship of our natural resources; and
- Create a strong park organization.

Accomplishing these goals will not be easy. The vision asks something of every resident. It requires public support for innovative funding, it requires significant private investment, and it requires us to be stewards of our surroundings. Together we can accomplish these ambitious but necessary goals for the future of our children and our community. The Anchorage Bowl Park Plan marks a new beginning for the city, a new dedication by Park staff and a new community spirit among us all.

Sincerely,



Mayor Mark Begich



Acknowledgements

A special thank you to all those who have contributed to this Plan.

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Special Dedication-

The entire municipality would like to acknowledge the work of past generations of park planners and community members who had the vision and foresight to preserve and shape the great parks, open space and greenbelts that add so much value to the quality of life for all Anchorage residents. In particular, we would like to extend our warmest thanks to Victor Fischer who, as planning director, helped author Anchorage's first formal Park Plan in 1954 and set the vision for future generations to come. We should aspire to such greatness for our children.

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Special Thanks to Past Members

Richard Lobdell

Gary Matthews

James Balamaci

Steve Beardsley

*In memorial for his lifetime dedicated to improving
recreation opportunities for our community-*

Bill Bryson

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*former municipal employee or commissioner

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Executive Summary

Foundations of Planning

The purpose of the **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** is to provide a model for applying a systematic approach to the planning of parks, recreation, and natural use areas. The model ensures that a fair and equitable balance of parks and facilities are provided to all residents. The Plan is intended to be used by community leaders to improve parks and recreation for all citizens. It provides a measurable, objective, and defensible process to acquire, develop, and manage parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities in the Anchorage Bowl.

The fundamental reason for undertaking a park and recreation master plan is that park and recreation services are essential for the public health, welfare, and safety in the community. Planning for these services is necessary to create and maintain a healthy and desirable community in which people can live, work, and play. While the master plan itself is important, translating the assessment of community need into actions is the overriding purpose of a park and recreation master plan. These actions will create an inclusive, orderly, cost-effective, and publicly supported park and recreation system.

A park and recreation master plan must accommodate the future to ensure that immediate short- and long-range decisions relative to park and recreation services are sound, satisfy a broad range of needs, and benefit all members of the community. It is essential that the master plan respond to Anchorage needs, values, and

conditions in developing the community's ultimate park and recreation services.

A park and recreation master plan is an essential building block for accurate capital planning of overall local government functions. Park planning gives rationale to funders for supporting the organization's program and services. When competing for funds with other department entities (whether it be police, social services, utilities in the public sector), the various social programs of the nonprofit sector associations, or with amenities provided by private-sector enterprises, a plan gives "competitive advantage." If an organization has a well-conceived plan with solid rationale, the manager and those serving in an advocacy position can more effectively compete for funds.

Most organizations should expect a parks plan to be their most valuable tool for future decision making. A properly implemented plan is vital for efficient management and operations of a parks and recreation organization. It is the operational blueprint for the manager and is the main valuable tool for ongoing decision making; it is the director's responsibility to implement the plan.

Parks and recreation must be, and in the past has been, a key ingredient in the long-range community planning for Anchorage. Cooperative community planning means more than just sitting around a table and discussing generalities of what each organization is doing. It means getting together before the fact to consider the needs, resources, and objectives of each

organization and work out plans that integrate each organization into the community as a whole, whether it is physical resources planning, social planning, or both.

Long-range planning expedites coordination of different public entities and the management directions taken by each. The majority of cities and counties across the United States have developed prescriptive guides for the development of their respective neighborhoods and communities. The park and recreation manager should recognize that governmental entities should not have individually developed and isolated planning scenarios. Each service agency may feel a strong sense of dedication to its own unique function, but each runs the risk of criticism and funding difficulties if it does not synchronize with other governmental agencies.

The best scenario is for the entire community and its infrastructure to be planned cooperatively. This challenges managers to simultaneously integrate community improvements to complement overall community development and make efficient use of financial resources.

The Plan

Anchorage 2020 - Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan provides guidance and direction to land usage patterns and physical development in the Anchorage Bowl. The **Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** focuses on the basic needs of parks within the Anchorage Bowl, to provide for and reserve space for a range of leisure activities, and to retain a dimension of the natural environment as part of the overall design of the community. This Plan is intended to help community leaders and residents make sound long-range decisions that address the land needs, geographic distribution, and spatial relationships of parks, recreation facilities, natural resources, and trails to other land uses within the Anchorage Bowl.

The Plan is divided into two sections.

Section One provides an overview of parks, facilities, and the types of services currently available in the Anchorage Bowl. This section is a summary of the public engagement process and research conducted over the last two years, which were presented in eight discussion papers. (These are available through the Municipality of Anchorage’s Planning Department or Parks and Recreation Department.)

Section Two provides the policies, goals, objectives, and framework for plan implementation.

The Plan has several key components that are presented next and in more detail further along in the document. These include a revised Park Classification System, which organizes parks, natural resource areas, and recreation facilities into five classes. It includes a Level-of-Service (LOS) Model that provides a measurable method to determine how well parks and facilities are distributed throughout the Bowl. It includes a Core Service Model to provide guidance in establishing programs through an activity-based

accounting system. It outlines an ongoing public engagement process to monitor program acceptance and determine appropriate levels of development for future updates. Finally, the Plan provides for an annual review that is linked to the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) process. It suggests the need for a more complete update as required relative to population increases or changes in recreational use patterns and trends every three to five years.

Park Classification System

Parks today serve a multitude of uses for both passive and active recreation for people of all ages. The park system is composed of properties that vary in size, function, service area, and development. Anchorage’s parks, natural resource areas, greenbelts, trails, and access to thousands of acres of wilderness give form to the city. In return, parks add identity to neighborhoods, increase property values, and provide a transition between nature and urban development. The Plan contains recommendations for a revised classification system consisting of five elements described briefly below:

- **Neighborhood Use Areas:** These are close-to-home recreation areas that serve one neighborhood as a focal point for residents and include areas for informal play and family and community building.
- **Community Use Areas:** Community parks are larger in size and serve a broader purpose than neighborhood parks. The focus is on meeting the recreation needs of several neighborhoods or a large section of the community.
- **Special Use Areas:** This classification covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities that provide a single specialized use such as an equestrian center, a golf course, a sports park, an indoor recreation center, or a botanical garden. Special uses generally fall into three categories: Outdoor Recreation

Facilities, Historic/Cultural/Social Sites, and Indoor Recreation Facilities.

- **Natural Resource Use Areas:** These areas are lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, natural or wildlife habitats, open space, and visual aesthetics or buffering. Natural Resource Use areas are divided into three categories: Preservation, Conservation, and Reserve for future use.

- **Trails and Connectors:** These provide non-motorized links between residential areas, parks, and schools. This classification consists of trails, greenbelts, and linear parks and includes a mix of hard- and soft-surface trails. Maintenance of these areas is dependent on the type of trail and design standard. Trails and connector administration is implemented primarily through Anchorage’s **Areawide Trails Plan**.

A summary follows of the existing municipal parks (in 2004) and natural resources by type:

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Neighborhood Use Areas | 238 acres |
| Community Use Areas | 343 acres |
| Special Use Areas | 1,337 acres |
| Natural Resource Use Areas | 8,911 acres |
| Total | 10,829 acres |

Standards and LOS

Parkland need is primarily based upon a series of standards or Level-of-Service (LOS) models. Standards for parks were developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and adopted by the Municipality in the 1980s. The Municipality of Anchorage has revised their LOS standards as part of this plan update to reflect the current methodology recommended by the NRPA. The analysis and projections of future parkland needs are based upon these standards.

The Anchorage Bowl LOS standards are a set of recommendations containing a minimum and a desired LOS standard for each park use classification and facility type by geographic area and population. The standards are guidelines for the Parks and Recreation Department to plan and build required parks and recreation facilities. These can be found in Chapter 7 and in Appendix B and are expressed in acres of park type per 1,000 population or number of facilities per 10,000 population.

It is important to remember that park standards are based on a variety of methodologies, which are mostly subjective in nature. The application of LOS standards does not carry municipal regulatory status, nor should these be considered as cast-in-stone requirements. Rather, the standards should be considered dynamic guidelines to be used as a starting point to help the Municipality determine a fair and equitable distribution of facilities throughout the community.

Because the application of these LOS standards will be directly impacted by the community's land supply, tax base, and funding commitments, as well as recreational demand, there must be a reasonable amount of flexibility built into the process. A range between the minimum level and preferred level of services is

provided in the plan to allow this flexibility in the planning process based on budget constraints, limitations on resources, or changing community preferences over time.

Ultimately, Anchorage must reach a consensus on how much parkland, natural resources, and recreation facilities will be required to maintain the desired quality of life for the community.

Core Service Model

Establishing and defining core services is essential to any solid parks and recreation system. Services can be categorized based on general definitions with the understanding that flexibility is necessary depending on the age and ability of the user groups, ability to pay, and the current financial situation of the community (willingness to pay).

The first step for the Anchorage Bowl is to adopt a "Core" Services Model that is outlined in the Plan. The Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department should identify basic services and then establish an activity-based costing system that accurately reflects the actual cost of each of these services. A fee policy should be established for each category of services based on the cost of providing that service and the percentage of cost to be recovered.

Purpose of Policy

The public policy section (Chapter 6) is one of the most important components of the Plan. It establishes the direction that the Parks and Recreation Department should take over the next 20 years. This is presented in the form of a vision and mission statement for the department, followed by eight strategies or core values to guide the plan implementation. These core values include:

- Improve Maintenance and Stewardship of What We Have
- Private-Public Partnership
- Parks as Community Building Blocks
- Parks as Economic Engines
- Balanced Services & Facilities for a Diverse Community
- Access and Connections
- Stewardship of Natural Resources
- Creating a Strong Parks and Recreation Organization

These strategies provide the overall long-term guidance to the department. Each strategy has a set of policies, goals, long-term objectives, and short-term actions necessary to successfully implement the Plan. These are intended to supplement the goals and policies of **Anchorage 2020** and the **Areawide Trails Plan**.

Parks Plan and Governance

Governance is a framework within which the policy-making body makes decisions about the future of an organization. Ideally, fundamental decisions about the organization's future should be policy-driven. Such policies need to reflect what all of the stakeholders connected with the organization believe in, what they believe the organization stands for, and what it values.

Values are beliefs in right and wrong. They determine what is acceptable and unacceptable, what is ethical and what is not. As with individuals, the values and perspectives of organizations will consciously or subconsciously determine the behaviors and choices made by those associated with the organization in the face of needed change. In this sense, policy is fundamentally important to the organization's governance. Excellence in governance begins with the recognition that all board

and staff activity depend upon a commonly held set of values and perspectives developed from either a strategic planning process or by default.

While the essence of governance lies in policy-making, many boards or policy-making bodies typically are not involved in creating the right types of policy. What is needed is not the narrow policy of specific actions and procedures; it is the broad policy that describes the essence of what an organization believes, stands for, and values. These values and perspectives then will form the base of the more specific, mechanical, and visible aspects on which the organization is based. The broad policy determines the direction of an organization's effort, gives guidance, and allows for effective management control.

The most important cornerstone of good governance is a vision that explicitly contains and addresses the fundamental values of the organization. Focus on vision encourages long-term thinking by the governing authority that, in turn, enables the agency to respond in a proactive manner. The organization's mission, goals, and objectives must complement the vision and help to ensure its implementation. Likewise, all aspects of the organization (including staff deployment, written procedures, operational plans, budgets, training plans, and facility and program development) should reflect the vision.

Plan Implementation

The information presented in the Plan creates a set of tools for determining the future park and recreation needs of the Anchorage Bowl parks and recreation system. The needs are presented in the form of an LOS guideline. The recommended LOS can be compared to the current inventory for each park type and facility to determine if the current LOS meets or exceeds the standard or if there is a deficit. If a deficit exists, the community can prioritize funding to create or enhance parks and facilities to relieve the deficit before developing additional parks or facilities in other areas. This is an ongoing interactive and systematic process that must include sound public involvement, accurate measurements of existing facilities, realistic appraisal of the financial capabilities, and fair and honest leadership.

Below is an outline of the steps necessary to update the plan annually for the CIP process. No single step should be left out, nor should any single step be considered the only appropriate source of information to base a decision on. In the end, it must also be recognized that it is an imperfect system that will, by necessity, require compromise and trade-offs to achieve a balanced and equitable system of parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities for the entire community.

Step One Annual Update of Park Inventory

The Parks and Recreation Department shall conduct an annual update of the physical inventory of parks and facilities. This should list all new development, acquisition, or disposal of parkland that has occurred during the past year.

Step Two Annual Update of Population

The Planning Department shall provide adjusted population numbers for each of the five park

district subareas as outlined in the Plan. Annual updates can be based on housing starts, building permits, or other methods that provide a reasonable accurate reflection of the population for each area.

Step Three Identify Park Needs

Calculate the current LOS for the Bowl and the five park districts using the inventory and population update and establish a range of annual needs between the minimum and desired LOS provided.

Step Four Evaluate Annual Income, Expenditures and Core Services

Prepare annual budget that provides an accurate accounting of programs and services using the activity-based cost accounting methodology. Update the Core Service model through a blue-ribbon panel of park staff and community leaders. Determine available funding for the next fiscal year and develop target budget.

Step Five Conduct Public Involvement

The Parks and Recreation Department shall conduct a variety of public involvement processes each year to help determine public use, attitudes, and demand for future development. This can include a number of steps but should include some form of each of the following:

- Participation: review annual rates of participation at those recreational activities that permit easy records to be kept. This includes organized sporting events, programs and classes, rentals, and major facilities.
- Annual Survey: conduct an annual survey to determine public perceptions of the department, levels of participation in a variety of activities and park visits, desire

for new development, and willingness to pay.

- Benchmark Update: maintain contact with benchmark cities and share pertinent data on an annual basis.
- Community Input: Each park district should work with community councils, Anchorage School District, and local user groups and forward annual park budget adjustments and CIP recommendations to the Parks and Recreation Commission on an annual basis.

Step Six Evaluate LOS with Public Involvement

Compare the range of LOS with current public involvement findings and the financial ability of the department to fund programs and new development. This should include the following steps:

- Adjust the LOS range and calculate the park needs for the next fiscal year using the tables found in Appendix C.
- Community Application for CIP: Review annual applications from Community Councils, user groups, and individuals for consideration on the CIP list. (See Appendix C for sample form.)
- Score the proposed CIP using the above information using the forms found in Appendix C. The scoring process should begin at the five park district subareas for the first round to identify local needs. These score sheets should then be reviewed by park staff and forwarded to a park needs committee consisting of representation from the Parks and Recreation Commission, Parks and Recreation Department staff, and community representatives from the five park districts.

- Once the final project scoring is complete and projects have been ranked, the final step is to establish a balance between projected costs and funding levels for both the CIP and the operating budget.
- The Parks and Recreation Department will then administer an annual work program, budget, and CIP.

Park Plan Maps

Map Use

The **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** maps are intended for general reference and planning purposes only.

Except for actual school sites, these maps are not intended to represent specific locations of new park parcels. For areas with known deficiencies in the various park classification categories, the Municipality would target acquisition of new sites within the boundaries of the highlighted yellow circles (for Maps 2 & 3), and at the identified school sites (Maps 2, 3, & 4). These areas of deficiency are defined by and based on standards within the various park classifications.

For proposed Natural Resource Preservation and Conservation sites (Map 6), it is the direction of this Plan for the Municipality and other land-managing agencies to pursue appropriate protection methods (which might include, but is not limited to, fee-simple acquisition) for the applicable resources at each site.

The maps are described below:

Map 1 – Anchorage Bowl Park System: Map shows generalized

existing park locations, including existing and other lands that are used as parks under various land use agreements.

Map 2 – Neighborhood Use Areas:

Map includes existing (*green*), deficient areas (*yellow*) and potential school-park partnership sites at elementary schools (*pink*)

Map 3 - Community Use Areas:

Map includes existing sites (*green*), deficient areas (*yellow*) and potential school-park partnership sites at middle schools (*pink*).

Map 4 - Athletic & Winter Special Use Areas:

Map includes existing athletic and winter facilities (*green*), deficient areas for athletic and winter facilities (*yellow*), and potential Special Use areas for athletic and winter facilities at high schools (*pink*).

Map 5 - Indoor Recreation Special Use Areas:

Map includes existing indoor recreation Special Use areas, including recreation centers (*red*), public and private indoor ice arenas (*blue*), indoor swimming pools (*orange*), and community school program sites (*yellow*).

Map 6 - Natural Resource Use Areas:

Map includes location of existing Natural Resource-Preservation (brown) and Conservation (tan) resources within municipal park boundaries and existing parks (green).

Map 7 - Recreation Trails and Connections:

Map includes existing and proposed recreation trails. The locations of proposed trails in this map refer to idealized locations for future trails, new scenic greenbelts, and linear greenbelt connectors between parks, schools, and neighborhoods.

Note: Maps 6 & 7 are for reference and planning purposes. These two maps depict existing and proposed recreation trails, which are formally delineated and administered by the Municipality's **Areawide Trails Plan** (1997).

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- Appendix D: Glossary of Terms

The Anchorage Bowl is set between the Chugach Mountains and Cook Inlet. The Anchorage Bowl has an abundance of natural features that connect parks, recreation facilities, public buildings, and neighborhoods.

The Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan outlines the policy and physical components necessary to maintain and improve this system over the next 20 years. The Plan is presented in two sections: Section One describes the general background and physical setting while Section Two provides the detailed goals, objectives, policies, and physical components that will need to be developed to meet growing recreation demand.

Section One: The Setting

This section presents the summary of the background research conducted over the past two years and presented in eight discussion papers.¹

Chapter 1 Introduction. History and background of Anchorage park and recreation planning over the past 50 years.

Chapter 2 State of Anchorage Park System. The physical inventory of the existing park system and programs provided to the community through the Municipality of Anchorage and other organizations.

Chapter 3 Funding Picture. Addresses the process for developing a sustainable and dedicated funding source to maintain the Parks and Recreation Department.

Chapter 4 Community Trends. Background and demographic projections on how Anchorage developed and will grow over the next 20 years, including population and land use forecasts based on **Anchorage 2020** assumptions.

Chapter 5 Needs Assessment. Recreational needs of the community, including recreation-demand analysis, benchmark city analysis, and recommended Level-of-Service (LOS) model.

Footnotes

¹ *The **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** is based on extensive research and public involvement process. This research is presented in a series of eight discussion papers that are available on the Municipality of Anchorage web page under the Planning Department project list.*



Introduction

Since Anchorage's inception as a railroad construction camp almost 100 years ago, access to parks, natural open space, and recreation has played a vital role in its development. Residents experience city life in the wilderness that few other American metropolitan areas can match. Over 10,000 acres of municipal parkland, 200 parks, and over 250 miles of trails and greenbelts connect neighborhoods, schools, parks, natural resource use areas,² and wildlife habitat with each other. The city has large expanses of Natural Resource Use areas within its boundaries and is surrounded by the 500,000-acre Chugach State Park and the 50 square mile Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge. These vast natural resource areas in and around the city are of significant benefit and enhancement to the community.

The parks, recreation, and natural resource system in Anchorage provides a major community asset that repays the investment of its citizens every day. The resulting return on investment is found in higher property values; better neighborhoods; improved lives and job performance as individuals exercise, play, and relieve stress; and a greener, more beautiful

urban environment in harmony with the majestic natural setting of Anchorage that helps attract tourists and new businesses.

This Plan is intended to help community leaders and residents make sound decisions that maintain and enhance the system of recreational assets and opportunities within the Anchorage Bowl. Generations of Anchorage residents have built a system that faces many changes and challenges, including funding reductions, population growth³, ethnic diversification, an aging population, and a dwindling land supply in the Anchorage Bowl. These challenges can be perceived as daunting, or as opportunities to continue the stewardship and tradition of the Anchorage park system that was passed onto this generation from those pioneers who created it.

Park Vision

Since the 1920s, Anchorage residents have planned, protected, and treasured parks, natural areas and places of recreation and conservation. Starting in 1954, there has been a consistent emphasis on providing balanced parks and recreation services for all

Footnotes

² *Natural Resource Use Area is used to describe those areas within the Anchorage Bowl Parks and Recreation System that are reserved primarily for their natural functions, such as air and water quality, flood control, or wildlife values, but can also provide public access for trails. The term is synonymous with natural open space or open space, greenbelt, and habitat area.*

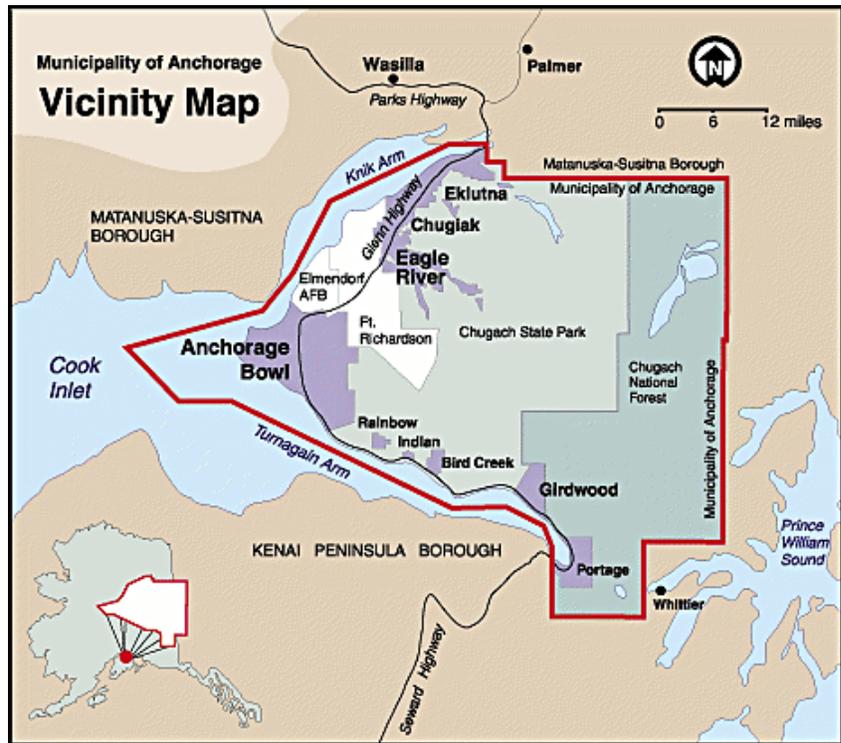
³ *In 2001, the population of Anchorage was 264,937 municipal-wide (U.S. Census estimate), up 1.8 percent from the previous year. **Anchorage 2020** estimates that there will be 50,000 to 90,000 new residents in Anchorage by 2020.*

Anchorage residents. In 1954, Anchorage had a limited number of programs and facilities and a few hundred acres of parks. By 1970 the system had expanded to provide basic facilities and programs, and had 1,635 acres of parks. There are now over 10,000 acres of parks and natural resource space in the Anchorage Bowl. (See Figure 1.)

The visionary aspect of these past plans included preservation of critical natural resource areas, emphasis on multi-use school facilities, and development of close-to-home facilities for all. This has resulted in a comprehensive network of interconnected parks, recreation facilities, trails, and natural resource areas that are enjoyed by residents today.

Note: Anchorage is surrounded by State and Federal lands that provide a wealth of outdoor recreation opportunities for residents.

Figure 1. Anchorage Bowl and Vicinity Map



Guiding Principles

A set of common principles can be found in past park plans from 1954 to the 1985 **Parks, Greenbelt and Recreation Facility Plan to Anchorage 2020**.

Recreation as an Essential Element.

Parks and recreation are essential to a balanced community. Parks, open spaces, natural areas, trails, recreation facilities, and programs in Anchorage are essential elements of the community that create a livable, dynamic, and economically vibrant city.

Connected System of Parks, Greenbelts, and Recreation Facilities.

A network of natural resource areas exist throughout Anchorage that preserve and enhance scenic vistas, fish, wildlife, and plant habitats and their ecological functions and values.

Stewardship – Open Space and Greenbelt Conservation.

Anchorage residents value and care for public spaces and natural resources, recognize and respect the intrinsic values of all organisms, and are stewards of all the elements of the built and natural world and favor sustaining them for future generations.

Partnerships. Great parks and recreation facilities do not happen without cooperation. Anchorage residents work together and with other organizations through private-public partnerships to build parks and facilities that place an emphasis on joint-use and multi-use facilities to reduce the cost of duplicate land acquisition and facility development.

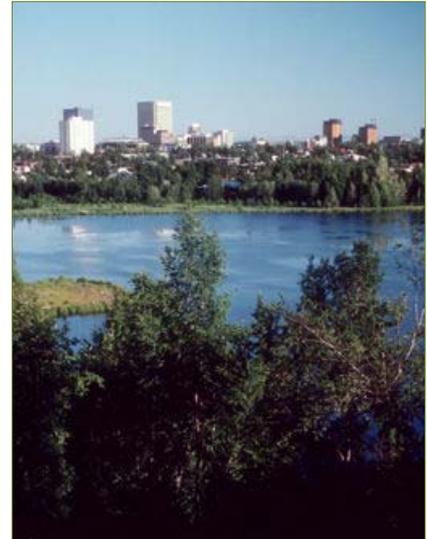
Future Needs. There is recognition that development will continue in the community and ample lands and facilities must be acquired and protected in public ownership to provide a wide variety of high-quality parks, open spaces, natural areas, trails, recreation facilities, and programs to meet current and future recreation needs.

Inclusive and Accessible. There is a community-wide commitment to ensure Anchorage residents have equitable access to safe parks, open spaces, natural resource areas, recreation facilities, and programs.

City Form and Processes. The parks and natural resource areas of Anchorage define unique neighborhoods, provide connections to the environment, and create a sense of place for residents.

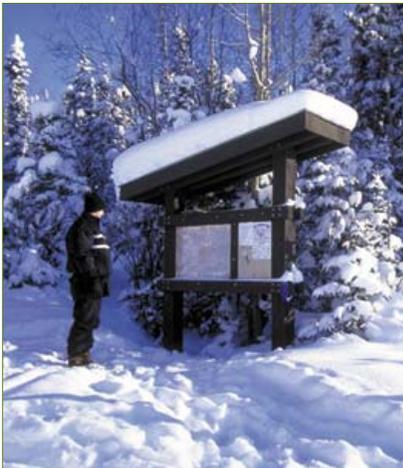
Civic Involvement. Residents are actively involved and participate in the planning, development, programming, and maintenance of the city's parks, natural resources, and recreation programs.

Anchorage has a special character and all-season access to adventure and nature.



State of Anchorage Park System

Premier System



Today Anchorage residents and visitors enjoy a wide range of parks, natural resource areas, and recreational facilities. (See Map 1 and Appendix A-Park Classification and Inventory.) The unique natural features in Anchorage are one reason many residents choose to live here. Anchorage's parks, natural open space, greenbelts, trails, viewsheds, and access to thousands of acres of wilderness give special character to the city and all-season access to adventure and nature. In return, parks add charm to neighborhoods, increase property values, and provide a balance between nature and urban development. In 2002 and 2003, Anchorage earned the highest five-star rating in Expansion Management Magazine's "Quality of Life Quotient."⁴

Anchorage is distinguished by its natural resource areas. Almost 80 percent of municipal parkland is undeveloped natural resource areas with low-impact recreation facilities, such as trails and parking areas. Far North Bicentennial Park contains 40 percent of Anchorage's parkland and is one of America's largest urban natural parks. Chester Creek, Campbell Creek, Fish Creek, and

Rabbit Creek Greenbelts protect ecological health and provide people with opportunities to connect with nature, improve their health, spend time with family, and enjoy the beauty and refuge from the city. The Municipality plants thousands of flowers each summer, adding to the charm and beauty of the city for residents and visitors.

Added to these outstanding features are over 250 miles of paved and natural surface trails, which provide significant biking, walking, jogging, in-line skating, strolling, and skiing opportunities. A multitude of sporting events in both organized and non-competitive leagues attract thousands of participants each year. The Parks and Recreation Department manages horticulture services, including planting of thousands of flowers and roadside maintenance of street landscapes. These and other recreation facilities and programs create one of the premier park systems in the nation that immeasurably supports the health and well-being of Anchorage citizens.

Footnotes

⁴Anchorage Economic Development Corporation Web Page.

The Anchorage Bowl Park System

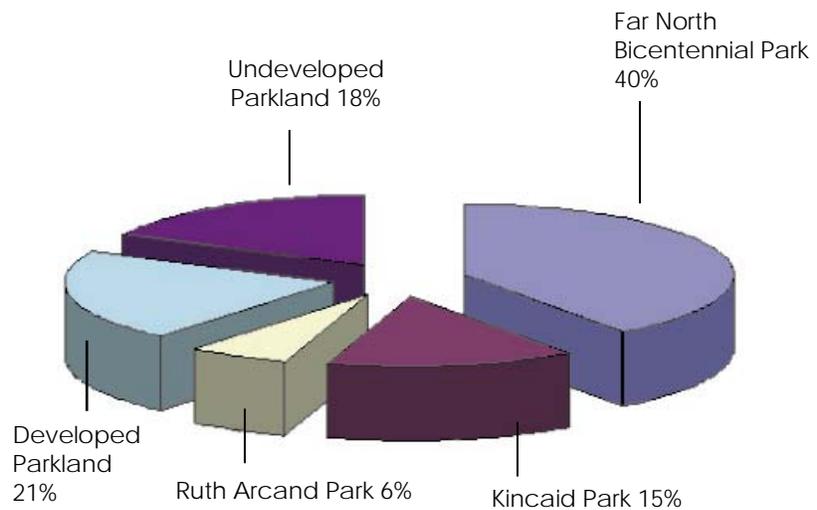
Anchorage is fortunate to have a large park system with 53 acres of parkland per 1,000 population (2004). Of those acres, over 55 percent are found within three major parks, which includes 4,000 acres at Far North Bicentennial Park, 1,000 acres at Kincaid Park, and 600 acres at Ruth Arcand Park. (See Figure 2.) Over 79 percent of parks, open space, and recreation facilities in the Bowl are mostly used as natural resource areas with limited development that includes trails, picnic areas, and some parking lots. The remaining 21 percent of land is devoted to more traditional neighborhood and community parks that have a mix of developed facilities and natural features.

The **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** addresses the land needs, geographic distribution, and spatial relationships of parks, recreation facilities, natural resources, and trails to other land uses within the Anchorage Bowl. The Plan contains a system comprised of four inter-related park classifications that are described briefly below and in more detail in Appendix A-Park Inventory and Appendix B-Park Classification. (See Figure 3, following page.)

Neighborhood Use Areas: These are close-to-home recreation areas that serve one neighborhood. These include neighborhood parks, mini-parks, and school parks for informal play, family, and community building that create sense of neighborhood and serve as focal points for local residents. Neighborhood parks form the backbone of the park system and are typically 5 to 10 acres in size but may be smaller (1-2 acres) due to lack of available land.

Community Use Areas: Community parks are larger and

Figure 2. Anchorage Bowl Parkland Distribution



serve a broader purpose than neighborhood parks. Examples include community parks, town center parks, and middle school sites. Their focus is on meeting the recreation needs of several neighborhoods or a large section of the community as well as preserving unique landscapes or natural use areas. They allow for group activities and offer other recreational opportunities not feasible, nor perhaps desirable, at the neighborhood level and can range in size from 10 to 50 acres.



Special Use Areas: The Special Use classification covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities and high school campuses that provide a single specialized use such as an equestrian center, golf course, sports park, indoor recreation center, or botanical garden. These areas are used for athletic tournaments and events, specially organized activities, with special requirements— therefore providing economic as well as social and physical benefits to the community. Special Uses generally fall into three categories: Outdoor

Anchorage earned the highest five-star rating in Expansion Management Magazine's "Quality of Life Quotient."

Figure 3. Anchorage Bowl Park Classification

| Area | Purpose | Function (Recreational Uses) | Managed Condition | Level-of-Service Factors |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| <p>Neighborhood Use Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini-Park • Neighborhood Park • Elementary School Sites • Developed Trail • Access Corridor • etc. | <p>Close-to-home recreation where housing density is high, informal play, family social/community building, create sense of neighborhood, focal point for residents</p> | <p>Play areas, playground equipment, open playfield, individual picnic (shelter), small group picnic area, practice-quality athletic field, minimal parking, trail head access, balance of developed/undeveloped area, trail development as linkage for trail system</p> | <p>General maintenance--not at level required for specific activities; permits available for reserved uses only; moderate improvements to support facility type, but balanced; security lighting; informal landscaping; school grounds also typical use</p> | <p>Distance from home— 1/4 to 1/2 mile urban 1 to 2 mile rural; Persons per acre— standard 1.5 to 2.5 acres per 1,000 population; Accessibility Measure— 1/2 mile from trail urban and 1 mile rural</p> |
| <p>Community Use Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Park • Large Urban Park • Town Center Park • Middle School Site • Developed Trail • Access Corridor • etc. | <p>Specialized needs of broader community; higher technical design requirements; formal or organized play; sense of community; increase economic development potential</p> | <p>Multi-purpose sports fields; cross-country skiing; special event/activity facilities; formal interpretive/educational facilities; recreation centers; ice sheets; monuments/shelters; large picnic areas/shelters; chalets; potential visitor attraction</p> | <p>Some specialized, high-level maintenance; heavily scheduled and programmed use; moderate cost to develop; design standards and specifications; active management; formal parking, restroom, and support facilities</p> | <p>Distance from home— 1-2 miles; Persons per acre— standard 1.5 to 2.5 acres per 1,000 population; Accessibility Measure— 1/2 mile from trail urban and 1 mile rural</p> |
| <p>Special Use Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Facilities • Sports Complex • Ski Area • Golf Course • Special Event • Venue • High School Site • etc. | <p>Athletic tournament/event; highly organized activities; activities with special requirements; economic engine for tourism facilities</p> | <p>Golf courses; downhill ski areas; dog sledding trails; equestrian trails; skijoring trails; cross-country ski trails; motocross area; designated single-use sports fields/complexes; botanical and zoological gardens</p> | <p>Highly specialized maintenance and management requirements; specific game/field or event preparation on regular basis; activities limited to one or two purposes only; minimal grounds maintenance; some benches, signs, and beautification improvements requiring higher level of maintenance; low-level lighting; encourage informal uses and health-related activities.</p> | <p>Distance from home— 30-60 minutes one way; Persons per acre— standard 4.5 to 7 acres combined per 1,000 population; Accessibility Measure— 1 mile from home</p> |
| <p>Natural Resource Use Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation • Conservation • Reserve | <p>Conserve natural features of the land; retain and filter storm water; improve air quality; serve as buffers between incompatible land uses; lend definition to neighborhood areas; provide non-motorized links between residential areas, parks, and schools; protect wildlife and fish habitat; provide passive recreational opportunities.</p> | <p>Access, trails, nature appreciation, interpretation, and education; minimal resource impact; trail development and greenbelts as linkages for system; potential visitor attractions that focus on nature and interpretation</p> | <p>Access ways maintained, trailheads and trail maintenance, minimal formal areas, lighting (low level) where appropriate, minimal alterations to land; restoration of natural environment may be desirable with emphasis on use of native plant material.</p> | <p>Dictated by natural assets of land; No Standard; Distance Measure— 1 to 2 mile from home</p> |
| <p>Trails and Connectors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paved multi-use • Natural surface • etc. | <p>Provide non-motorized links between residential areas, parks and schools; close-to-home recreation; sense of community; increase economic development potential and healthy community</p> | <p>Trails, greenbelts, linear parks</p> | <p>Dependent on type of trail and design standard; mix of hard- and soft-surface trails</p> | <p>Distance to access point— 1/4 to 1/2 mile*; Persons per mile— 10.5 to 12.6 per 10,000 population</p> |

* Physical barriers should be factored into distance.

Recreation Facilities, Historic/Cultural/Social Sites, and Indoor Recreation Facilities. High school and middle school athletic facilities if designed for joint use could be used to meet some needs in this category.

Natural Resource Use Areas:

Natural Resource Use areas are set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics or buffering.

These lands consist of individual sites exhibiting natural resources; lands that are unsuitable for development but offer natural resource potential such as steep slopes, drainage ways and ravines, surface water management areas and utility easements; and

motorized links between residential areas, parks and schools, and close-to-home recreation. They enhance economic development potential, contribute to a healthy community, and provide wildlife movement corridors and habitat. This classification consists of trails, greenbelts, and linear parks and includes a mix of hard- and soft-surface trails. Maintenance of these areas is dependent on the type of trail and design standard. Citing and administration of new trail projects are both implemented primarily through Anchorage's **Areawide Trails Plan**. To the right is a summary of the Anchorage Bowl municipal parks and natural resources by type (2004).

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Neighborhood Use Areas | 238 acres |
| Community Use Areas | 343 acres |
| Special Use Areas | 1,337 acres |
| Natural Resource Use Areas | 8,911 acres |
| Total | 10,829 acres |

PARKS



protected lands, such as wetlands/lowlands, shorelines along waterways, lakes and ponds.

Natural Resource Use areas are divided into three categories: Preservation, Conservation, and Conservation Reserve (future active park development). In addition, some acres have been set aside as reserve lands for future parks and development as the need arises.

Trails and Connectors: Trails and connectors provide non-

Winter City

Anchorage is a classic winter city with over six months of winter conditions each year. One of its premier winter attractions is more than 125 miles of groomed cross-country ski trails, including 25 miles lit for night skiing. Hilltop, Alpenglow, and Alyeska ski areas provide downhill skiing for beginners to Olympians. Dog sled racing, skijoring, ice skating, hockey, speed skating, and snowshoeing are other winter activities enjoyed within the Anchorage Bowl each winter.

Recreation Facilities and Services

The Parks and Recreation Department operates two community recreation centers and has a partnership with the Boys and Girls Club to operate two additional centers. Along with the Anchorage non-profit Community Schools program, these provide indoor recreation opportunities and continuing education.

Anchorage has a wide variety of recreation facilities that provide a variety of opportunities to recreate, exercise, learn, and interact socially, all of which are vital to building community and economic development in Anchorage. (See Appendix A for a full listing of municipal operated facilities.)

Cooperation and Coordination

The municipal Parks and Recreation services do not meet the demand or needs of the Anchorage residents alone. Rather, the community also relies on public-private partnerships and volunteers to expand the city's capabilities and to maintain, manage, and develop activities from Little League to senior centers. This is a nationwide trend and has become a fact of life for Anchorage. The Anchorage School District operates after-school programs and provides a large proportion of the outdoor athletic facilities for practice. State and federal land within the boundaries of Anchorage supplement outdoor recreation opportunities to the community.

Volunteers

Over 200 clubs and organizations within the Anchorage Bowl provide specialized recreation needs for the community. As the municipal budget for parks and recreation has been reduced, volunteers and private programs have, to a great extent, replaced services once provided by the Municipality. This includes a wide range of services from coaching youth sports, teaching adult reading, providing senior grandparents for youth-at-risk, challenge programs, maintenance of ball fields, and planting flowers.

Volunteers spend thousands of hours each year providing services and programs that have in the past been provided by government. The increased reliance on volunteers has helped bridge the gap in most cases, but as budgets continue to shrink a tremendous burden is placed on the limited resources and supply of volunteers. Today Anchorage successfully relies heavily on the community, but future budget cuts and greater reliance on volunteers, coupled with increasing demands may weaken the service capacity of the community.

Anchorage School District

The Anchorage School District (ASD) has traditionally met a significant portion of Anchorage's recreational needs. This includes the public use of school facilities for non-school related activities by clubs and organizations as well as comprehensive organized after school sports programs.

The ASD provides a number of outdoor recreation facilities that meet the needs of Anchorage residents. These include elementary school playgrounds, playfields, and hard-surface areas for basketball and other court games. Middle schools and high schools have more sports and athletic fields, as well as open fields for practice.

Tennis courts and outdoor ice hockey rinks can be found at some sites.

The best outdoor facilities, such as football fields found at high schools, are in high demand for school-sponsored athletic programs and are not usually available to the general public. The ASD Capital Improvement Program (CIP) includes funding for synthetic (engineered) athletic fields that will reduce long-term maintenance costs and increase public use. The MOA Parks and Recreation Department should match funding for such facilities to the extent that they are used for public/organized sports use.

During the summer, all usable, safe fields are scheduled Monday through Thursday for youth sports organizations. During winter, most of the hockey rinks are scheduled for community use. The ASD rents facilities to individuals, organizations, and primarily to youth organizations.

State and Federal Lands

State and federal lands are a significant source of recreational lands in and around Anchorage. Chugach State Park and the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge provide over a half million acres of recreational lands. Land holdings of the Bureau of Land Management



and the U.S. Forest Service are also predominant features of Anchorage’s natural environment.

Chugach State Park

Chugach State Park is one of the largest state parks in the United States. The Park contains approximately 495,000 acres and is located primarily within the Municipality of Anchorage. The Park’s western boundary lies at the western foothills of the Chugach Mountains, just seven miles east of downtown Anchorage. Because of its proximity to the State’s major population center, Chugach State Park experiences a high level of use by Anchorage residents. (See Figure 4.) Anchorage and the surrounding communities have grown rapidly since the Park was created, straining park facilities located near these communities and increasing the demand for park access.

Use of the Park by residents has grown dramatically since 1970. The Park provides a wide range of outdoor recreation opportunities year round. Uses include walking, hiking, mountain biking, camping, snowshoeing, skiing, horseback riding, mountain climbing, and the only motorized winter access from Anchorage for snow machining. Use of the Park has grown many times faster than the population of the surrounding communities due in part to improved road access, increased parking, additional facilities, and changes in recreational use patterns, perceptions, and preferences.

New park users seek out the more obvious trailheads first, taking advantage of well-marked trails, facilities, and educational interpretive signage. Those



c. Alaska Division of Tourism

trailheads or access points closest to the more densely populated areas of Anchorage are experiencing a significant increase in use. It is common to find the Glen Alps parking lot full or overflowing on sunny weekend days or summer evenings. Several of the most heavily used access points to Chugach State Park are at or nearing capacity and threatening the Park’s ability to safely, efficiently, and effectively accommodate the number of users desiring access.

For many years, residents living close to Chugach State Park have enjoyed relatively unrestricted access to this state resource. Residents of downtown Anchorage have used many informal or traditional points for access to the park as well. Many of these access points involve crossing private undeveloped land. As Anchorage and the surrounding communities have continued to grow, more and

more of these larger tracts of land are being subdivided and sold to individuals and developers who may be unaware of traditional access routes to state land and/or are unwilling to allow continued access. In addition, many newer landowners may have concerns about liability, loss of privacy, noise, and discourteous visitors.

Chugach State Park provides a wide range of outdoor recreation opportunities year round and maintaining public access is of high importance to the community. These uses include walking, hiking, camping, snowshoeing, skiing, horseback riding, mountain climbing, and the only motorized winter access from Anchorage for snow machining.

Figure 4. Chugach State Park Estimated Visitor Counts

| Trailhead | 1998 | 2000 | 2002 |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Campbell Creek | 53,000 | 67,000 | 70,900 |
| Glen Alps | 118,700 | 165,000 | 188,500 |
| Rabbit Creek | 1,550 | 4,000 | 6,680 |
| Upper Potter | 3,700 | 3,350 | 4,040 |



Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge

The Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge (ACWR) extends from Point Woronzof southeast to Potter Creek, a distance of 16 miles. Potter Marsh is the best known section of the ACWR and is located between the Old and New Seward Highways. The Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge is a popular place for viewing the more than 130 bird species that nest in the area. In addition, a large representation of wildlife species in the region can be found on the Refuge. Rabbit Creek, Little Rabbit Creek, and Little Survival Creek, which flow into Potter Marsh, all support populations of humpback, coho, and chinook salmon and Dolly Varden char. Hunting is a popular fall activity in the Refuge, as is ice skating during winter when Potter Marsh freezes.

Thousands of visitors stop to view wildlife at Potter Marsh each year. It is easily accessible with parking areas, an elevated boardwalk, and interpretive signs along the New Seward Highway to provide wildlife viewers with an excellent vantage point for viewing and photography. Public access will be greatly improved with the completion of the proposed Potter Marsh Nature Center. Access to the largest extent of the Refuge is available at some unimproved corridors at several municipal parks.

Bureau of Land Management

In Anchorage, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) owns approximately 720 acres of land known as the Campbell Tract that is used by the public as parkland. The BLM Anchorage Office oversees energy and minerals, natural resources, and realty programs. The BLM Campbell Creek Science Center is an Alaskan outdoor environmental education center for people of all ages that encourages interest and participation in the management of natural resources. The center is operated by BLM with assistance from its many partners. The center's secondary use is for training or meetings for agencies, businesses, or groups that focus on science education or natural resource management.

Military Lands

In Anchorage, two military installations occupy a large land area to the north and east of town. Fort Richardson Army Post borders the Bowl along the northeastern boundary and impacts access to recreational lands along the Chugach Foothills. Elmendorf Air Force Base is adjacent to the northern sections of the Bowl and has significant recreational lands along the lower Ship Creek area. Both installations impact local recreational needs through

participation in off-installation activities. While most base or post recreational facilities are closed to the public, there are three golf courses and an alpine ski area open and meet core needs in these areas.

Heritage Land Bank

In 1983 the Anchorage Assembly created the Heritage Land Bank (HLB) to manage lands received from the State of Alaska for the benefit of "present and future citizens of Anchorage." The mission of the Heritage Land Bank is to manage uncommitted municipal land and the Heritage Land Bank Fund in a manner designed to benefit the present and future citizens of Anchorage, promote orderly development, and achieve the goals of **Anchorage 2020**.

The HLB achieves this mission by inventorying and managing HLB land and resources to benefit a variety of municipal purposes. The HLB does not manage all municipal land but only parcels that it has management authority over and that are in the HLB inventory.

The Heritage Land Bank's holdings currently consist of approximately 8,000 acres distributed between Chugiak and Girdwood, with most of its acreage (approximately 5,000) in the Girdwood Valley. The inventory includes residential, commercial, industrial, open space, and recreational areas. The Heritage Land Bank Advisory Commission oversees the operation of the Heritage Land Bank and the HLB Fund.

If it is determined that an HLB parcel does not serve a specific public purpose or meet a public need, it may be subject to disposal. The Commission and HLB policies and procedures call for a public use determination and process for disposal of lands. Land disposal activities may include: land sales, land exchanges, leases or easements. The HLB also issues permits for a variety of temporary activities on HLB land. Land may be withdrawn from the Inventory and transferred to other municipal agencies or the Anchorage

School District if it is needed for the location of public facilities or purposes.

Private-Public Partnerships

This is the fastest growing segment of leisure service providers in the Anchorage Bowl. Traditional organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA, and over 200 clubs and non-profit organizations represent individual activities, special interests, and the religious and non-secular affiliates who provide and maintain recreation facilities.

Some examples of active public-private partnerships providing recreational opportunities in the Anchorage Bowl include:

- **Alaska Botanical Garden:** The Alaska Botanical Garden is open year-round to the public. They are operated by a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the beauty and value of plant material through education, preservation, recreation, and research.
- **Alaska Zoo:** Since 1968, the Alaska Zoo has been a non-profit organization dedicated to rehabilitating injured and orphaned Arctic and Sub-Arctic wildlife while educating the public about conservation through education programs.
- **Boys and Girls Club:** The Boys and Girls Club is a dedicated youth facility with a neighborhood-based building designed solely for youth programs and activities and is open every day, after school, and on weekends, when kids have free time and need positive, productive outlets. The Club is available and affordable to all youth, including those who cannot pay or may lack access to, other community programs.

- **Northeast Community Center:** The Northeast Community Center is operated by the Boys and Girls Club and features a game room, computer lab, and basketball court. Some of the programs available to the public are Youth of the Month, Power Hour, Daily Challenge, Torch Club, Kids in Control, Smart Moves, and Kids Kitchen.
- **YMCA:** The YMCA provides recreation to the public in a similar fashion to private athletic clubs. Their facilities include a pool, fitness center, free weights, gym, aerobics, outdoor running track, outdoor field, preschool room, babysitting, whirlpool, and sauna. The YMCA also provides programs in health and fitness, aquatics, camps, sports, community development, teen activities, and childcare.



Commercial Recreation

A recent trend in recreational services is the increased reliance on private, for-profit businesses to meet growing recreation demand in certain specialized areas. The growth of athletic clubs since the 1985 plan is one example of the private sector stepping in to satisfy a demand at market rates. These facilities provide anywhere from the basic exercise equipment and classes to a wider range of facilities and services ordinarily provided at a traditional community center including gymnasiums and swimming pools.

Another emerging trend is the continued growth of sports such as ice skating, indoor soccer, golf, and downhill skiing. These activities require major investments of funds to build and maintain. Once considered a critical public sector component, shrinking public budgets have resulted in a market rate commodity approach to providing the services. One

There is an increased reliance on private business to meet the growing demand in specialized recreation areas.

Public and private partnerships are a fast-growing segment of leisure service providers.

Everyone has memories of a city park, whether it is a childhood experience at a playground or yesterday's walk on a neighborhood trail.



concern is that as these facilities become privatized and fair market rates are charged, access is limited to those who can afford to pay the prevailing rates. In 1993 the greatest barrier to participation in ice hockey was the lack of available ice time while today one of the greatest barriers may well be the cost of ice time.

There is also an emerging trend for outdoor recreation outfitters and guides to provide close to home nature and interpretive recreational activities to a growing demand. These private enterprises provide specialized services such as horseback riding, boating, skiing, birding, and others on publicly owned lands.

Other areas where commercial recreation providers have appeared in Anchorage include management of the Sullivan Arena

and municipal golf courses, as well as the appearance of a private indoor soccer facility.

Benefits of Parks to the Community

The benefits of parks, recreation and natural open space are well understood and almost intuitive in nature. Virtually everyone has memories of a city park, whether it is a childhood experience at a playground or yesterday's walk on a neighborhood trail. Parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities provide economic benefits to Anchorage by attracting businesses and adding to the overall health and quality of life in the city. Residents live in a vibrant, modern city that offers an exceptional array of leisure activities. Parks, natural use areas, greenbelts, trails, view sheds and access to wilderness give character to the city. Parks

Anchorage's parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities provide economic benefits to Anchorage by attracting businesses and adding to the overall health and quality of life in the city.

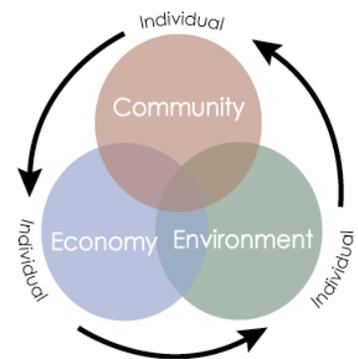
add charm to neighborhoods, increase property values, and give city living a balance between nature and development⁵. The four distinct park planning elements which follow should be used to provide a balanced management of the Anchorage parks system. While some parks may place a stronger emphasis on one benefit over another, it is only with a balanced approach that strong parks, open space, and recreation systems are developed and maintained.

- **Individual Development:** Parks provide for a balanced and healthy community. In the latest Anchorage survey, respondents indicated health benefits as the #1 reason for recreating. Recreation provides the individual with a renewed sense of self worth. Play provides an opportunity to engage the creative self regardless of age. (See Figure 5.)
- **Community Building:** Parks are one of the quickest and most effective ways to build a sense of community and improve quality of life. Parks channel positive community participation by getting diverse people to work together towards a shared vision. Volunteer development

of a park or facility, is an example of community-building through a parks and recreation system.

- **Economic Enhancement:** Parks improve real property values, attract workers to live and work in the community, and entice retirees to stay. Economic revitalization of neighborhoods and town centers is enhanced by an investment in parks, which attract private investment capital. Parks and trails not only are enjoyed by residents, but attract visitors to extend their stay and contribute to the local tourism markets⁶.
- **Environmental Stewardship:** Natural Resource Use areas retain and filter storm water, improve air quality, serve as buffers between incompatible land uses, lend definition to neighborhood areas, provide links between residential areas, parks and schools, and protect wildlife and fish habitat, while providing recreation opportunities close to home.

Figure 5. Individual Development



Our parks add charm to neighborhoods and increase property values.

Footnotes

⁵ American Planning Association Briefing Papers, www.planning.org/cpf/briefingpapers.htm

⁶ Parks and Economic Development, John L. Crompton, American Planning Services, 2001.

Park Benefits Not Available to All

The Anchorage Bowl park system: “incredible” or “in crisis”? It depends on whom you ask. A resident living near one of the large regional parks who enjoys daily walks in the woods or bike rides after work through the forest with the potential for wildlife sightings would say “It is the reason I live here.” A resident

with a young family looking for a neighborhood park close to home for their children would say it is disappointing. In fact, our park system is sensational and yet lacking at the same time. Increased population, rapid development, changes in our culture and housing, and lack of adequate land and funding threaten the park system that is so vital to our city’s quality of life.

corresponding loss of critical open space has occurred at a record pace. This happened during the same period that traditional state and federal funding sources decreased steadily, reducing spending on many core services. While ample land base was acquired, new neighborhood park needs identified in earlier plans were not funded adequately to meet the pre-1985 demand level.

Today, while the Anchorage Bowl has over 10,000 acres of park land almost 79 percent of these lands are undeveloped or unimproved. More importantly, three city parks make up over 56 percent of all Anchorage Bowl park acreage (FNBP with 4,000 acres, Kincaid Park with 1,000 acres and Ruth Arcand Park with 600 acres). Recreational facilities are in high demand at peak periods and recreational participation is limited by an undersupply of facilities. Private land is being developed at a near record pace leading to the loss of private open space, which is heightening awareness of the importance of natural use areas to a balanced community.

The challenge today is that many residents think the Anchorage parks and recreation system is in good shape, when in fact almost every area of the city is underserved in some basic ways. The system is heavily used and underfunded.

Lands are seemingly being developed with little consideration of the open space and recreation needs of new residents. More people, less land, and aging facilities will compound these problems in the future, while correspondingly increasing the challenges of maintaining Anchorage’s parks, natural resource areas, and recreation facilities and services.



The challenge today is many residents think the Anchorage parks and recreation system is in good shape, when in fact almost every area of the city is underserved in basic ways.

While much of the early park plans were successfully implemented, it is important to temper this success with some critical shortcomings. This includes the loss of potential portions of Chester Creek Greenbelt, which were intended to extend east to Muldoon, as well as the loss of other critical open space that had been identified in earlier plans. In addition, an emphasis was placed on acquiring open space lands instead of developing needed recreational facilities. In addition budget reduction and competition between user groups also contributed to a shortage of developed close-to-home neighborhood and community parks that continues today.

Since 1985 we have seen the greatest inability of Anchorage to keep abreast of the need for parks, recreation, and open space for a rapidly growing population. Pressure from new residential development and the

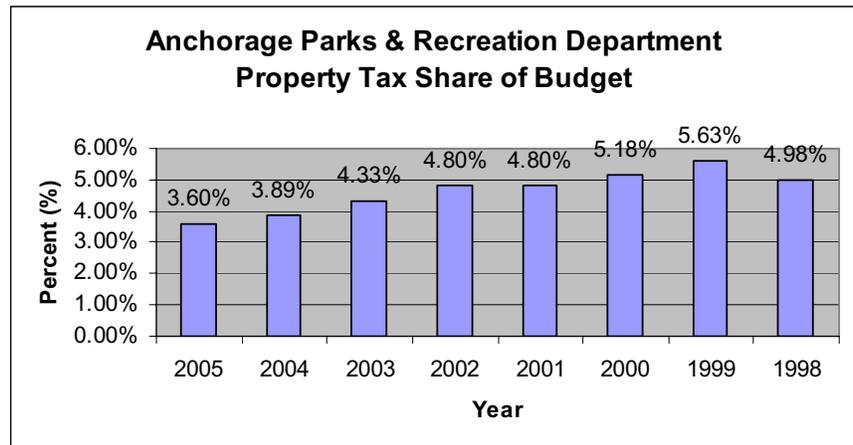


For Anchorage to fully benefit from its parks and recreation system, the Municipality needs to invest in organizational capacity.

Organization Capacity

Continued budget reductions over the past 15 years have contributed to the overall diminished state of the parks and recreation department. This has limited the amount of available resources, reduced staff and capacity. In the past 10 years the Anchorage Parks Department has gone from 5% to 3.5% of the total city budget while at the same time increasing the number of athletic fields, trails, and parks by almost 8%. To address the problem, the parks and recreation department has developed a long-range plan with shared community vision.

For Anchorage to fully benefit from its parks and recreation facilities, the Municipality needs to continue to build organizational capacity. The municipal Parks and Recreation Department is working to develop clear, focused policies; improving public engagement; training staff to better manage resources; and defining core services.



Anchorage Park and Recreation Share of Tax Revenue for entire City Budget



Funding Picture

The decreasing funding of the Parks and Recreation Department budget has affected recreation programs and facility conditions significantly.

The Municipality of Anchorage Department of Parks and Recreation has faced consistent budget reductions over the past several years. These years of trying to do more with less have left the Department with a significant reduction in the resources needed to maintain facilities, provide core services, and serve the public's parks and recreation needs. Over the past 10 years the share of total municipal budget for Parks and Recreation has gone from 5% to 3.5% while facilities to maintain have increased by 8%.

As these sources have declined over the past years, the organizational strength of the Parks and Recreation Department has also decreased, especially in the areas of natural resource management.

Reductions to the Parks and Recreation Department budget have affected recreation programs and facility conditions significantly. Contributing to this dilemma is the fact that Anchorage residents desire recreation programs and quality facilities but have not exhibited a willingness to pay their own way. User fees are significantly below the national averages and other tax revenues are limited.

The problem of inadequate funding must be remedied in order for the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department to provide the services and facilities desired by the public. All indications are that this is the major issue that contributes significantly to other problems in the system. Budget trends over the past several years indicate a lack of predictability in the funding sources traditionally relied on for parks and recreation services. Logically the development of new funding sources including user fees; private-public partnerships; and grants and donations from foundations and private citizens will need to be embraced as well as other traditional sources.

Services Model

Parks and recreation services represent a wide array of options for citizens and they are expected to be readily available. However, funding, facility staffing, and natural resource limitations make it imperative that a determination be made about what services should be provided to whom and at what cost. Establishing core services is essential to any solid parks and recreation system. A core services model is a standard business

Note: The Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission has adopted the Core Service Model and Fee Subsidy Model

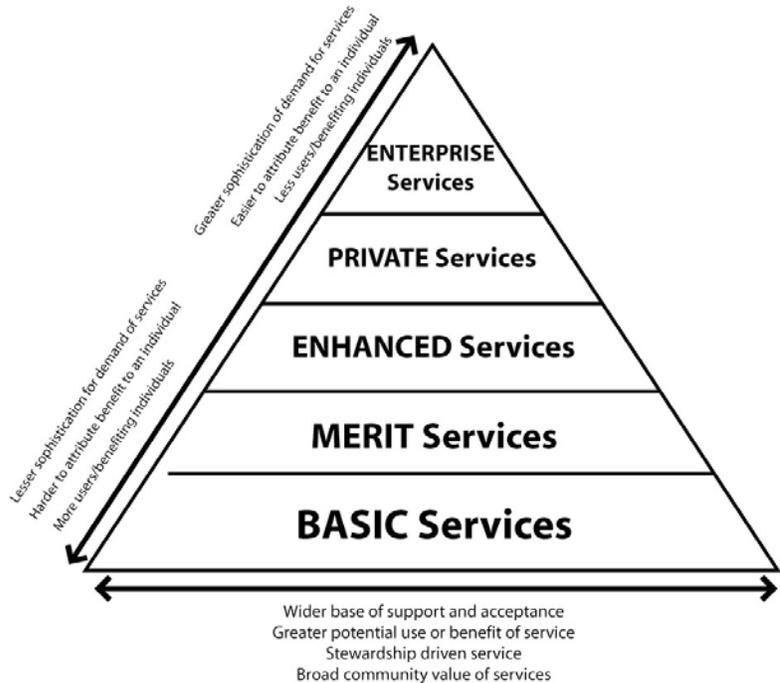


Figure 6. Parks and Recreation Core Services Model

management method. (See Figure 6.)

Services can be categorized based on general definitions with the understanding that flexibility is necessary depending on the age and ability of the user groups, ability to pay, and the current financial situation of the community (willingness to pay). Service categories include basic services, merit services, enhanced services, private services and enterprise services:

- Basic Services** are the foundation of parks and recreation. These should be offered at no or minimal cost to the participant because they provide widespread benefit and enjoyment; are difficult to quantify for costing; and/or are difficult to administer fees. Basic services generally include the provision and maintenance of parks, natural resource areas, trails, and their associated facilities and are essentially the core of a community's parks and recreation system.
- Merit Services** benefit a large proportion of the community, reach out to a broad range of people, and benefit society as a whole; but a specific user charge can be collected without great expense. They serve a broader public good as they assist those unable to take advantage of regular services due to disabilities, age, income, or other limiting factors. Merit services generally include the provision of



recreational programs within parks and recreation facilities, non-profit rental of general park areas, and some youth/senior social activities.

- Enhanced Services** benefit a wide range of user groups but are specifically targeted to interest groups, age groups, or ability levels. Benefits can be attributed more to an individual participant than to the greater community. They can be easily identified and specific user charges can be collected. Enhanced services generally include youth and adult sports programs such as soccer, softball, and basketball or more specialized instructional services like swim lessons. They take place at



The Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department should identify its basic services and then establish an activity-based cost system. An activity-based system identifies operating costs for each program, service, and facility and then establishes appropriate fee structures based on the fee policy for each category of service.

more specialized parks and recreation facilities that are costly to operate, but serve as facilities where basic and merit services can also occur.

- **Private Services** benefit a relatively small range of user groups and are targeted to specific interest groups or ability levels. Benefits and cost of use can be attributed mostly to individual participants and only slightly to the greater community. Private services generally include highly specialized youth and adult programs such as hockey, swimming clubs, and Nordic skiing, which mostly occur in facilities that are significantly expensive to operate and provide limited opportunities for basic or merit type programs.
- **Enterprise Services** can compete in the free-market sector under most circumstances but may require some assistance for large capital improvements. They are targeted to specific users based on an expressed demand for the service and a willingness to pay for the service. Benefits can be almost exclusively attributed to individual participants and are nearly nonexistent for the greater community. Enterprise services generally include golf courses, sports arenas, ice

arenas, equestrian facilities, and other highly specialized and technical venues.

The first step in resolving Anchorage's parks funding dilemma is to adopt a "Core" Services Model. The Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department must identify its basic services and then establish an activity-based costing system so fees can be set for all programs and services that do not fit into the basic services category. A fee policy should be set for each category of services based on the cost of providing that service and the percentage of cost



to be recovered. Traditionally, fees for park and recreation programs and services in Anchorage have been low, subsidized by many years of abundant state and federal funding. That reality ended in the late 1980s. A new reality exists in which it is necessary for individuals to contribute to the costs of the programs and services that provide them with enjoyment, fitness, and recreation. Benchmarking comparisons of recreation fees show Anchorage to be approximately 66 percent less than the norm (30 percent cost recovery rate in benchmark cities versus 11 percent in Anchorage-see page 28-31 for details).

Adoption of the Core Services Model along with the activity-based cost accounting model is an essential first step for the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department. The increased revenues and increased operating efficiencies inherent in adopting these models will help to create an improved sense of stability and predictability in the department's financial situation.

Parks and Recreation Funding Options

Increased fees and increased recovery of costs will make a difference in the bottom line for the Parks and Recreation Department. However, it may not be enough to counteract continued decreases in budget allocations. Additional funding sources need to be identified and implemented if the department is to continue providing the basic services that Anchorage citizens demand at the level of quality they expect. The citizens of Anchorage must consider that maintaining and improving parks and recreation systems will require them to pay for a share of the expenses in one way or another.

Other funding sources that can help to contribute to the parks and recreation budget are dependent on the political climate and public perception of the parks and recreation organization. Because many potential funding sources

rely on taxpayers' contributions, they take time to implement and require a concerted effort by the Parks and Recreation Department to advocate for the requested funds.

In addition to these options, there are options for obtaining additional funding from the community on a volunteer basis. The Department has created a non-profit foundation with an active and influential board of directors which has generated substantial investments in the first year from private and corporate donors in Anchorage. These funds will be contributed to the Parks and Recreation Department based on specific needs and community desires.

Additional funding sources need to be identified and implemented if the department is to continue providing the basic services Anchorage citizens expect.



Actively seeking grants from state and federal agencies as well as private and corporate foundations is another way to increase funding options. The establishment of public-private partnerships and recruitment of volunteers can provide options to help off-set the direct cost of providing parks and recreation services to the community.



Community Trends

Anchorage's population has become much less transient and more committed to long-term community betterment.

The Municipality of Anchorage makes up a 1,955 square mile area between northern Prince William Sound and upper Cook Inlet. The area consists of mostly rugged mountainous terrain, with 84 percent taken up by national forest or state parklands and tidelands. Six percent is occupied by military reservations. Only about 10 percent of the entire Municipality is inhabited.

Most residents live in the Anchorage Bowl, the most urbanized area of the Municipality. It occupies approximately 100 square miles, bounded by Chugach State Park, Turnagain and Knik Arms, and by the Elmendorf Air Force Base and Fort Richardson Army Post. Anchorage lies as far north as Helsinki, Finland and almost as far west as Honolulu, Hawaii.

Anchorage is still young enough that some residents have seen it progress from a small pioneer town to a modern metropolitan center. A positive legacy of the community's recent growth and public prosperity is that its buildings are relatively new. Many key public facilities such as the performing arts center, civic/convention center,

sports arena, regional library, and a major addition to the museum of history and art, were all built in the mid-1980s. Anchorage's schools, utility infrastructure, roads and medical facilities have all been developed within the last 20 years or have seen substantial upgrades during this period.

Anchorage Settlement

For most of its history, Anchorage grew as a community of immigrants-newcomers from outside the State and Alaska Natives from rural areas within the State—all in pursuit of opportunity. At the time of the 1990 census, barely a quarter of Anchorage residents were born in Alaska. For decades, a seasonal boom-bust economy and military personnel rotations made Anchorage a fast growing town of transients without a strong stake in the community. Those who stayed as permanent residents lived in Anchorage by personal choice, not by chance of birth.

In the 1990s, economic stability and military cutbacks slowed immigration and reduced annual population turnover by half. As a result, Anchorage's population has become much less transient.

Anchorage Population

In 2004, Anchorage has a diversifying population. Racial and ethnic minorities are the fastest growing segment of the population and now account for about 30 percent of the total, a higher proportion than the national average for metropolitan areas.⁷ Alaska natives make up 8 percent of the total population and are the largest minority group. There are also substantial African-American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic communities, each making up about 7 percent of the total population.

It is anticipated that the population of the Anchorage Bowl will continue to grow as outlined in **Anchorage 2020**, which developed two levels of growth for the Anchorage Bowl with an estimated population of between 278,919 and 305,519 by 2020. (See Figure 7.)

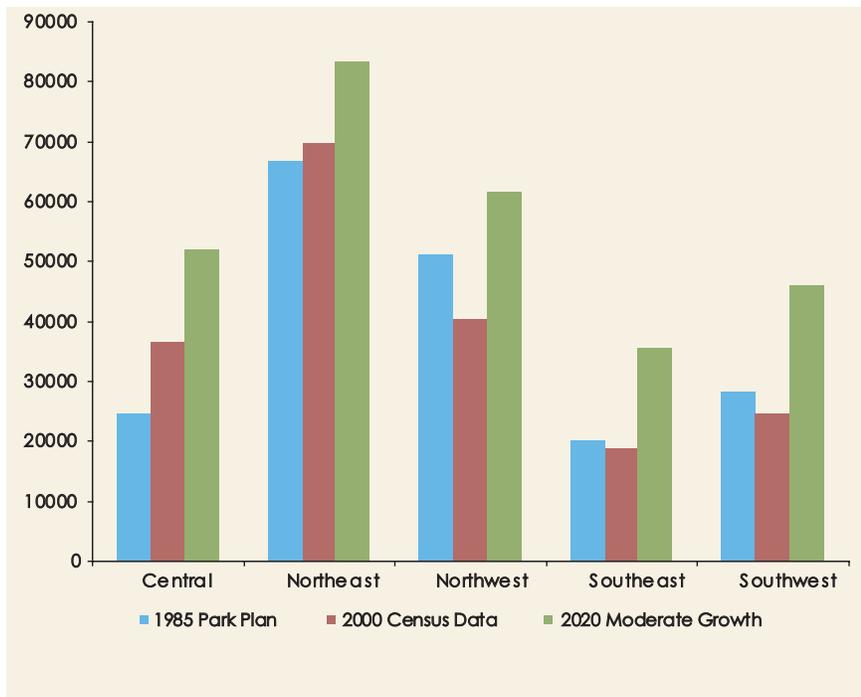
The Anchorage School District projects that average enrollment will decline in the short term; but in the longer term, the District predicts the number of school-age children will again climb, increasing the demand for services. The senior adult population in Anchorage is expected to grow rapidly,

which means rising demand for housing, facilities, and services, including public transportation and recreational services suited to and conveniently located for the senior population. This senior growth is expected to continue as the fastest growing age group in Anchorage. The Alaska Department of Labor estimates that seniors will make up 12 percent of the Anchorage population by 2018, although this is still lower than the projected national proportion of about 17 percent.

In the 1980s, the typical Anchorage resident was 26 years of age, single, predominantly male, and more inclined to participate in recreational activities than the lower-48 counterparts. Today, Anchorage residents are older (average age is 32) than the 1980s but still young in comparison with the national average. Anchorage has a slightly higher percentage of married families with children than in the 1980s, with corresponding higher enrollment in schools.



Figure 7. Population Growth for the Five Subarea Park Districts

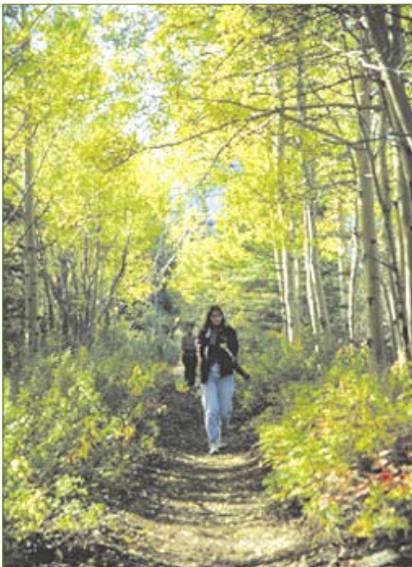
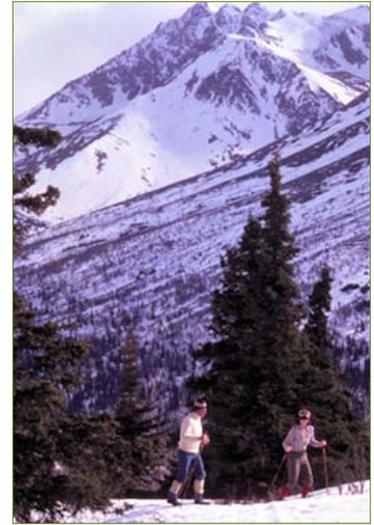


Footnotes

⁷ *Anchorage 2020 Plan*, page 14.

Recreation Trends

A 1979 Public Preference Survey completed as part of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) provided a statistically valid sampling of Alaskans' preferences towards outdoor recreation. The profile showed a strong preference for outdoor recreation that exceeded national levels of participation. Although no firm data can confirm this claim, recreation opportunities continue to play a major role in why residents come to or stay in Alaska. Access to outdoor recreation was the main reason

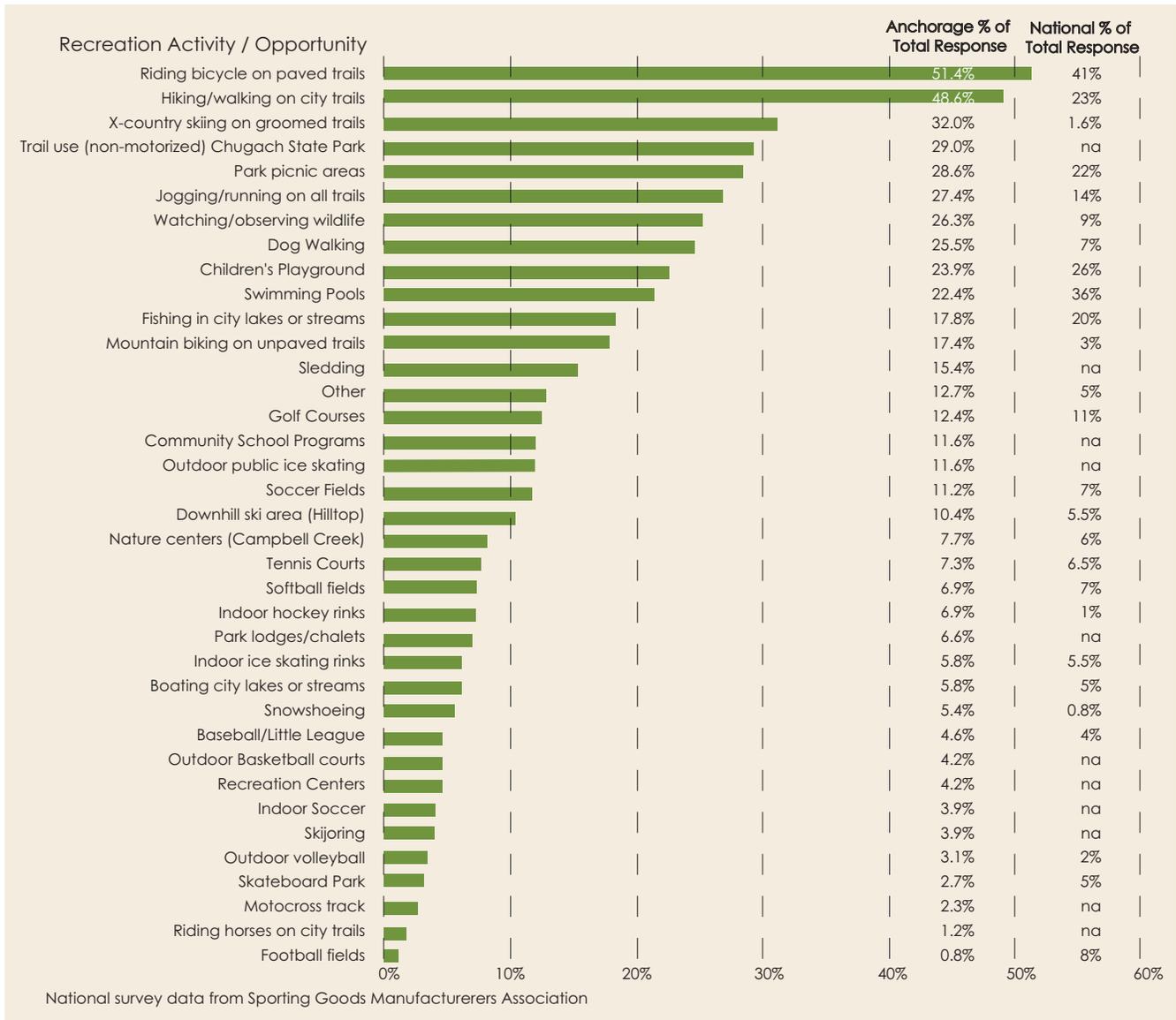


Anchorage residents continue to put a high premium on parks, open space, and recreation facilities.

given for coming to Alaska by residents of the southcentral region. Alaskans rated "being close to wilderness environment" as the third most important reason for living here. A number of surveys over the years have examined how Anchorage residents perceive and use the parks, open space, and recreation facilities, the results of which have consistently shown a preference for natural open space, access to outdoor recreation as well as developed neighborhood parks close to home.

Today Anchorage residents continue to place a high premium on parks, open space, and recreation facilities. The results of this Plan's public involvement process indicate that the community continues to place high values on access to outdoors, nature, trails, and open space. (See Figure 8, Community Participation Rates.)

Figure 8. Recreation Activity Participation Rates⁸



Footnotes

⁸ The 2003 Community Preference Survey was mailed to 1,600 residences with N of 259 providing a margin of error of + or- 10 percent.

Land Use and Housing Trends

Much of the suitable land in the Anchorage Bowl is already developed. Of the 64,500 acres in the Anchorage Bowl, only 23 percent of the total (about 15,100 acres) remains undeveloped. Residential use occupies 36 percent of all developed land in the Anchorage Bowl. Parks and open space accounts for 22 percent of all developed land, and public rights-of-way take up another 19 percent. (See Figure 9.)

These factors, combined with implementation of **Anchorage 2020** policies, will shift both housing

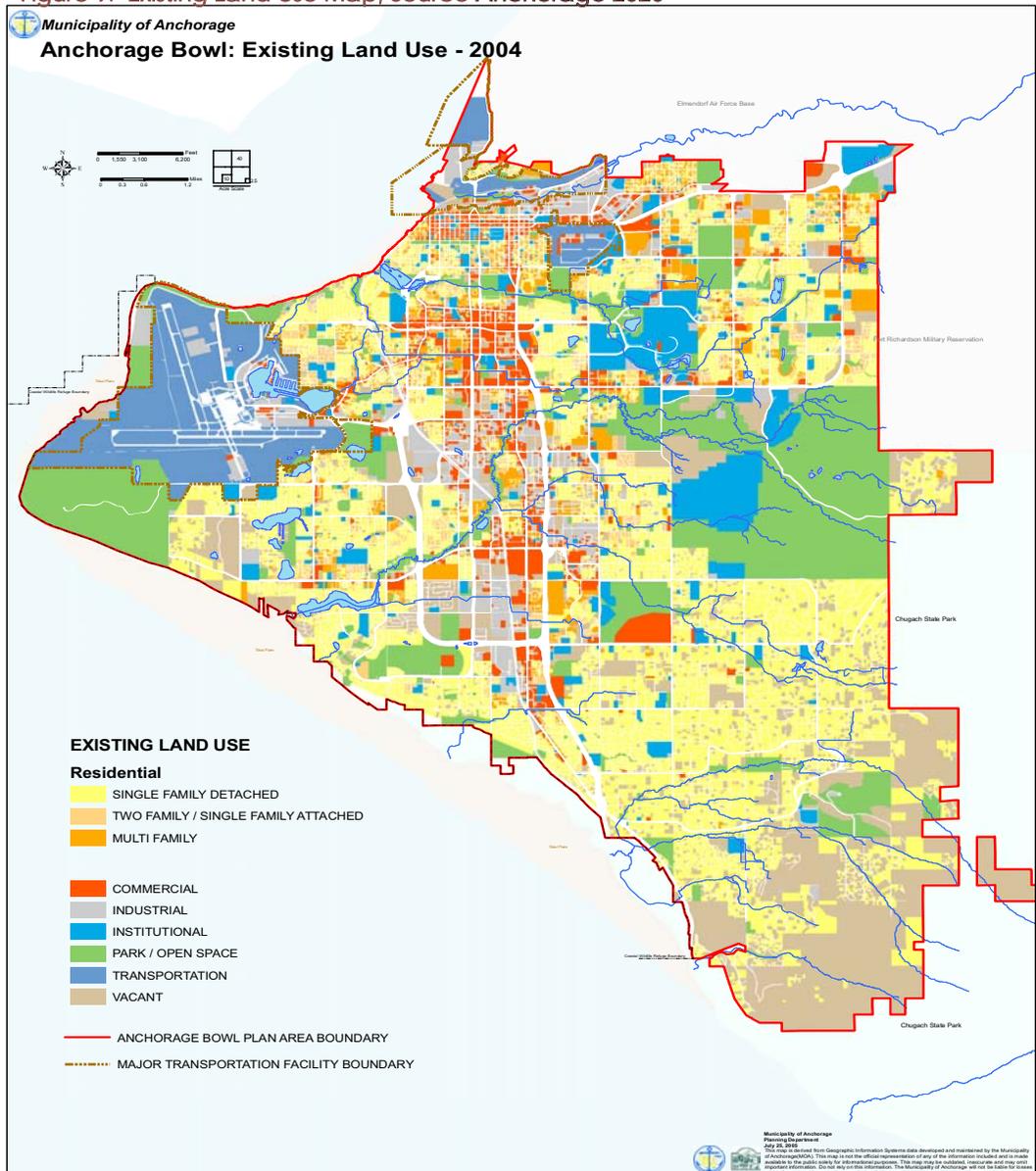
and employment centers. The change in housing development will shift from the single family homes on the hillside toward more central portions of the Anchorage Bowl, particularly near major employment centers, town centers and along transit corridors.

The remaining supply of vacant land in the Anchorage Bowl suitable for development is limited. Of the remaining 15,100 acres, about 6,675 acres are suitable for development. Another 5,050 acres are limited by environmental constraints and classified as marginally suitable for development. The remaining 3,375 acres are limited by more

severe environmental constraints and classified as being generally unsuitable for development.

As a result of these land use and housing trends, which include institutional and educational facility needs, the Anchorage Bowl park system will be challenged to keep pace with growth and residents' needs by 2020. As demand for housing increases, demand for recreation opportunities and activities will grow and open private land and green spaces appropriate for parklands may disappear. Heightened competition for a diminishing amount of land will drive up prices, and garnering the resources necessary to meet

Figure 9. Existing Land Use Map, Source Anchorage 2020



park system capital needs will be increasingly difficult. This may require smaller park units to be developed where space is not available.

Tourism Trends

Of the estimated 1.5 million visitors traveling to Alaska in the summer of 2003, about 60 percent traveled to Anchorage. The number of visitors to Anchorage has increased more than 5 percent annually since 1990, although this has slowed the last two years. Efforts are underway to develop more local attractions and lengthen visitor stays, particularly in the winter season.

A \$16 million Alaska Native Heritage Center opened in 1998. Plans are underway for a major expansion of the Anchorage Museum of History and Art and the possible expansion of the Anchorage Convention Center.

While increased tourism days—even visitors staying just one extra day in the Anchorage Bowl—provide the potential for



Efforts are underway to develop more local attractions in Anchorage and lengthen visitor stays, particularly in the winter season.

economic development through new jobs and employment, it also increases the use of local parks and recreation facilities by visitors. This scenario will impact local users by placing an additional strain on limited parks, natural resource areas, and facilities.

A new trend of increasing winter tourism is attracting the attention of organizations in the city. This represents a potential economic contribution for the community that is currently untapped. The development and promotion



of world-class venues will be necessary if this concept is to be successful and there will have to be an emphasis placed on building for the local community as well as for the visitor.



Needs Assessment

Introduction

The purpose of the needs assessment done for this Plan is to identify the recommended Level of Service (LOS) to meet the recreation needs for the Anchorage Bowl. Using information and results obtained in the analysis of recreation demand, benchmarking, and public involvement, this needs assessment addresses LOS and recreation needs for park use classifications and individual recreation facilities.

The Anchorage Bowl LOS standards provide a general methodology and guideline to measure both the adequacy of services and the individual size and location for various parks and recreation services. The LOS are based on population distribution of people in discrete planning areas. The standards provide guidelines for the Parks and Recreation Department to plan and build park and recreation facilities needed for the community so that a balance of facilities and services are provided uniformly to all districts within the community. To create accurate LOS standards, research and analysis was undertaken that included: recreation demand analysis, benchmark analysis, updating of the current park

use classification system, and an inventory of facilities. The resulting LOS standards allow Anchorage to equitably and logically improve the park, recreation and open space system as funding allows.

The application of LOS standards should not carry city regulatory status; rather the standards should be considered guidelines that express the desires of the community to provide a balanced and equitable distribution of facilities. Establishment of unrealistic LOS standards can have the impact of creating a system that cannot be achieved without substantial investment in land and new facilities.

Because the application of these LOS standards is directly impacted by the community's land supply, tax base and willingness to fund, as well as recreational demand, there must be flexibility built into the process. A range between the minimum level and preferred level of services is provided to allow some flexibility in the planning process based on budget constraints, limitations on resources, or changing community preferences over time. These need to be adjusted annually as required to reflect changing trends in recreation use.

A range between the minimum level and preferred level of services is provided to allow some flexibility in the planning process.

Recreation Demand Methods

Just as in producing a tangible product, if a customer's needs are not met, and there is no demand for the product, it will not sell. Such is the case with any parks and recreation agency. If the mission and vision of the agency are geared toward providing recreational opportunities to a community, it is necessary to understand what that community desires in order to provide those opportunities. Because of the wide variety of recreational opportunities available to Anchorage Bowl citizens, it was necessary to employ several methods to determine community recreation demand, including public engagement, public survey, facility demand analysis, and review of local and national participation trends.

The public engagement process was designed to incorporate multiple methods (stakeholder interviews, public meetings and workshops, and a random survey of Anchorage residents) to determine needs, desires, and attitudes of Anchorage Bowl citizens. To develop an even more accurate assessment, the planning team performed a recreation analysis for the Anchorage Bowl. This analysis used two different methods to determine current demand and predict future demand of facilities. A demand analysis was performed on facilities for which sufficient



data were available, and national participation trends for a variety of recreational activities were reviewed and analyzed.

To analyze facility demand, the project team, with the assistance of Anchorage Parks and Recreation and Anchorage School District staff, identified the types of facilities for which adequate data existed. The analysis of data measured current use levels by calculating the number of hours a facility type was scheduled for use and dividing that by the total number of hours the facility type was available. The number of scheduled hours is the current use level, while the number of available hours is the use capacity of the facility. The result is a percentage of capacity currently being used for each facility type.

Recreation demand was then calculated for a facility type by comparing current use data to data from the community recreation survey and local and national recreation trends. These comparisons allowed the planning team to make a prediction about the available quantity of a particular facility type and current and future demand.

Facility types for which there were sufficient data available to conduct a demand analysis included baseball, softball, Little League fields; soccer fields; swimming pools; and park picnic shelters. This analysis found that none of these facilities are being used to their full capacity based on current scheduling and availability set by Anchorage Parks and Recreation and ASD. Combined with the trends analysis, the predictions, listed in green box at right, were made about the future demand for facility types.

To determine demand for facilities for which there was insufficient data available to perform a detailed facility demand analysis, statistics from the **Superstudy® of Sports Participation**, published by the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (SGMA) were used. These statistics provide a glimpse into national participation trends for various sports and recreational

- Slow to little growth in the demand for baseball or Little League is anticipated in the Anchorage Bowl over the next several years.
- Slow to little growth in the demand for softball is anticipated in the Anchorage Bowl over the next several years.
- Overall demand for soccer in Anchorage will continue to grow over the next several years, with demand for indoor soccer and outdoor soccer continuing to grow, but at a relatively slower rate compared to the rapid growth experienced during the past ten years.
- No growth in the demand for swimming pools is anticipated over the next several years.
- Growth in the demand for picnic facilities should remain closely tied to population changes.

DEMAND

activities. The national trends and participation rates along with data from the Anchorage community recreation survey and public participation assisted the planning team in projecting the future demand for recreation facilities in the Anchorage Bowl. (See Discussion Papers 5 and 6 for recreation-demand analysis.)

Boise, Idaho



Portland, Oregon



Boulder, Colorado



Spokane, Washington



Duluth, Minnesota



Vancouver, British Columbia



Benchmark Analysis

The purpose of a benchmarking analysis is to assist Anchorage in comparing its parks and recreation facilities, programs, and administration to six cities determined to be desirable comparisons. Goals can be set, standards re-defined, and priorities established. By maintaining a relationship with these six cities, Anchorage can continue to monitor benchmarking on an annual or semi-annual basis.

The 6 cities that were selected by 100 Anchorage stakeholders, through 2 voting processes, and included in the Anchorage benchmarking study were:

- Boise, Idaho
- Boulder, Colorado
- Duluth, Minnesota
- Portland, Oregon
- Spokane, Washington
- Vancouver, British Columbia

Specific information was gathered from the benchmark cities on a variety of parameters pertinent for comparison to the Anchorage parks and recreation system.

Discussion Paper Seven: Benchmark Cities provides a summary of the comparison parameters and results. In the majority of cases, Anchorage LOS fell within the average range and compared well against the benchmark cities. Anchorage was far above average when comparing parameters like park acreage, natural resource areas, and trails, yet significantly below average in areas such as number of staff members and recovery of operating costs through user fees and charges. The average comparison city recovered nearly 30 percent of its parks and recreation operating costs, while Anchorage recovers only 11 percent. In essence, this represents a loss of 20 percent of the total operating budget (approximately \$2.5 million based on the 2003 budget).

In order to recover such losses, the Parks and Recreation Department must adopt an activity-based cost accounting model. For this model, operating costs will be determined for each program, service, and facility, and then appropriate fees are calculated and charged based on the fee policy for the category of service.

Benchmarking is used extensively in private industry. This information allows Anchorage citizens to decide how they wish to compare with these other cities. Those cities that provided the closest comparison and should continue to be monitored include Boise, ID, Duluth, MN, and Spokane, WA.

Figure 10. Benchmark Response
(Table 2 of 2)

| General Features | Anchorage, AK | Boise, ID | Boulder, CO | Duluth, MN | Portland, OR | Spokane, WA | Vancouver, BC | Average | Median |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Staff and Financial Total Parks & Recreation Operating Budget (2003) | \$ 12,307,950 | \$ 13,508,063 | \$ 21,371,242 | \$ 5,657,283 | \$ 51,975,287 | \$ 8,769,907 | \$ 78,565,170 | \$ 29,974,492 | \$ 17,439,653 |
| Total Parks and Recreation Operating Budget as Percent of City's Total Operating Budget | 4% | 11% | 11% | 4% | 7% | 7% | 10% | 8% | 8% |
| Average Expenditure per person for parks and recreation | \$ 65 | \$ 68 | \$ 188 | \$ 66 | \$ 97 | \$ 46 | \$ 144 | \$ 107 | \$ 90 |
| Total Revenues from Fees and Charges (2003) | \$ 1,324,280 | \$ 3,924,465 | \$ 8,526,756 | \$ 1,699,200 | \$ 14,620,055 | N/A | \$ 31,894,420 | \$ 12,132,979 | \$ 8,526,756 |
| Percent of Parks & Recreation Operating Budget from Fees and Charges | 11% | 29% | 40% | 30% | 28% | N/A | 41% | 34% | 30% |
| Total Maintenance Budget1 | \$ 4,352,930 | \$ 3,227,669 | \$ 5,879,131 | \$ 1,264,683 | \$ 16,728,487 | N/A | \$ 18,000,000 | \$ 9,019,994 | \$ 5,879,131 |
| Total Maintenance Budget as Percentage of Total Parks & Recreation Operating Budget | 35% | 24% | 28% | 22% | 32% | N/A | 23% | 26% | 24% |
| Total Number of Maintenance Staff | 97.00 | 171.00 | 55.00 | 48.00 | 84.00 | 109.00 | 340.00 | 134.50 | 96.50 |
| Total Full Time Maintenance Employees per 1000 Acres of Park Land | 1.99 | 25.65 | 10.22 | 2.52 | 8.06 | 10.55 | 70.98 | 21.33 | 10.39 |
| Total Number of Parks & Recreation Employees (Non-Maintenance) | 134.00 | 745.00 | 259.00 | 82.00 | 404.00 | 272.00 | 1760.00 | 587.00 | 338.00 |
| Average Total Park Staff per 1,000 population | 0.71 | 3.76 | 2.27 | 0.95 | 0.75 | 1.43 | 3.22 | 2.11 | 1.74 |

* Anchorage's maintenance budget includes horticulture, seniors, roadside landscapes as well as the traditional Park and Recreation maintenance

Park Needs

Parkland need is primarily based upon a series of recreation area standards or LOS. National standards for parks were developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and adopted by the Municipality in the 1980s. In the mid-1990s, the NRPA revised their standards to reflect specific local needs such as climate, participation and community values. The Municipality has adopted LOS standards that reflect the current methodology recommended by the NRPA. The analysis and projections of future parkland needs are based upon these standards. It is important to remember that standards are based on a variety of methodologies that are subjective in nature. Ultimately, communities must reach a consensus as to how much parkland, natural resource, and recreation facilities are required to maintain the quality of life for the community that is desired.

The basic values and benefits underlying the creation of park standards include:

- They provide a systematic means to approach park acquisition and development;
- They help promote equal distribution of parkland and recreational facilities from one subarea to another;
- They help maintain a balanced system of parks, natural open space and a wide range of recreational opportunities while avoiding overuse of parklands and facilities in those cases where opportunities might be limited;
- They provides an opportunity to view system components within an overall context with measures for success;
- They allow for incremental and orderly improvements to the park and recreation system;

- They build community trust, support, and cooperation; and
- They are flexible and allow adjustments to meet changing community use.

Figure 11. Anchorage Bowl Parks Recommended Standard Level of Service per 1,000 Population

| Park Classification | Anchorage Bowl Current LOS | Anchorage 1985 Standard | Benchmark Cities top 33% | Recommended Anchorage LOS Range |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Neighborhood Use Areas | 1.5 | 2.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 to 2.5 |
| Community Use Areas | 1.5 | 7.5 | 1.5 | 1.5 to 2.5 |
| Special Use Areas | 7.15 | 20.0 | 4.5 | 4.5 to 7.0 |
| Natural Resource Use Areas | 42.1 | NA | 30.7 | No Standard Recommended |

These recommendations reflect the fact that the standards set in 1985 were highly ambitious and have not been reachable. As a guideline for recommending LOS standards, a target was set for Anchorage to be within the top one-third of the benchmark cities. Anchorage met or exceeded this target in most park use classifications. Therefore, the recommended LOS standards include a range from maintaining current levels to increasing park acreage per capita. This is based on what the benchmark cities are providing as well as what the Anchorage community has indicated as important to them. (See Figure 11.)

Note that while current LOS is provided for Natural Use areas, this is for comparison only, and it is recommended that LOS should not be used for these areas because they are defined by their natural characteristics and are a limited and finite resource.

We must reach a consensus as to how much parkland, natural resource, and recreation facilities is required to maintain the quality of life for the community that is desired.

Recreation Needs

In addition to the previous LOS analysis, standards were developed for a variety of recreation facility types frequently used by Anchorage Bowl residents. An inventory of facilities was conducted as a baseline for the recreation demand analysis and the benchmarking study as well as to determine current levels of service in Anchorage. (See Appendix A.)

The information and findings from this analysis provide a set of tools for determining the needs of the Anchorage Bowl parks and recreation system. The needs, in the form of an LOS standard, are then compared to the current inventory for each park type and facility to determine if the current LOS meets or exceeds the standard or if there is a deficit. If a deficit exists, the community would logically prioritize funding to create or enhance parks and facilities to relieve the facility deficit.

The determination of recreation need is applied system-wide as well as within the five Anchorage Bowl Parks and Recreation Service Districts (same as **Anchorage 2020** subareas) to determine if LOS standards are being met for the Anchorage Bowl as a whole, and within community districts and neighborhoods. Figure 11 provides a summary of the recommended LOS standards for Anchorage Bowl facilities. Figure 12 identifies the current and future needs based on the minimum and high LOS.

Establishing LOS needs is only the first step necessary to decide the types of development most needed and where they should be built. This information is intended to be used by park planners to help guide community development strategies and utilize limited resources to their maximum benefit but is not the only method utilized to calculate need. (See Figure 13.)

Figure 12. Recreation Facilities Recommended Level of Service Standard per 10,000 population for some municipal operated facilities.

| ACTIVITY | Anchorage Bowl Current LOS | Benchmark Cities Average LOS | Benchmark Cities top 33% | Recommended Anchorage LOS Range |
|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Baseball & Little League | 2.0 | 1.51 | 2.6 | 1.5 – 2.0 |
| Softball | 1.4 | 1.71 | 1.9 | .75 – 1.25 |
| Soccer | 1.5 | 1.67 | 2.3 | 1.75 - 2.0 |
| Outdoor Basketball | .6 | 1.85 | 1.9 | 1.0 – 2.0 |
| Tennis Courts | 2.1 | 2.95 | 3.4 | 1.5 – 2.0 |
| Volleyball Courts | .6 | .64 | .8 | .60 - .80 |
| Golf Course (includes Military courses) | .42 | .11 | .2 | .20 - .40 |
| Playground Structure | 3.5 | 2.85 | 3.0 | 3.0 - 3.5 |
| Picnic Shelter | 1.5 | .69 | 1.0 | 1.0 – 1.5 |
| Outdoor Swimming Beaches/Pool | .2 | .29 | .30 | .20 - .30 |
| Dog Park | .26 | .21 | .26 | .20 - .26 |
| Skateboard Park | .11 | .11 | .15 | .20 - .25 |
| Sledding Hill | .74 | .44 | 1.0 | 1.0 – 1.5 |
| Cross-country Ski Trails (miles) | 3.95 | 1.82 | .21 | 4.0 - 5.0 |
| Lighted Ski Trails (miles) | 1.32 | .02 | .02 | 1.0 – 1.5 |
| Outdoor Skating Areas | .36 | NA | NA | .36 - .70 |
| Recreation Centers | .16 | .86 | .47 | .16 - .26 |
| Indoor Swimming Pools | .26 | .13 | .16 | .16 - .26 |
| Indoor Ice Skating Rinks | .32 | NA | NA | .25 - .32 |
| Trails | 12.6 | 6.0 | 10.53 | 10.5 – 12.6 |

Figure 13. Recreation Facilities Needs Assessment- per 10,000 population

| Recreation Facilities | LOS per 10,000 population | Existing Inventory | 2003 MIN LOS | 2003 REC LOS | 2020 MIN LOS | 2020 REC LOS | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Little League & Baseball Combined | 1.5 - 2.0 | 39 | 28.5 | 38 | 41.85 | 55.8 | |
| Softball Field | .75 - 1.25 | 19 | 14.25 | 23.75 | 20.925 | 34.875 | |
| Soccer Field | 1.75 - 2.0 | 34 | 33.25 | 38.00 | 48.83 | 55.80 | |
| Football & Rugby Field | .25 - .5 | 8 | 4.75 | 9.5 | 6.975 | 13.95 | |
| Basketball Court Outdoor | 1.0 - 2.0 | 11 | 19 | 38 | 27.9 | 55.8 | |
| Tennis Courts | 1.5 - 2.0 | 42 | 28.50 | 38.00 | 41.85 | 55.8 | |
| Volleyball Court | .6 -.8 | 12 | 11.40 | 15.20 | 16.74 | 22.32 | |
| Golf Course | .2 -.4 | 4 | 3.8 | 7.6 | 5.58 | 11.16 | |
| Playground | 3.0 - 3.5 | 74 | 57.00 | 66.50 | 83.7 | 97.65 | |
| Open Play Field | 3.0 - 3.5 | 27 | 57.00 | 66.50 | 83.7 | 97.65 | |
| Picnic Area | 3/0 - 3.5 | 74 | 57.00 | 66.50 | 83.7 | 97.65 | |
| Picnic Shelters | 1.0 - 1.5 | 31 | 19.00 | 28.50 | 27.9 | 41.85 | |
| Horseshoe Area | .25 - .50 | 15 | 4.75 | 9.50 | 6.975 | 13.95 | |
| Skateboard Park | .20 - .25 | 1 | 3.8 | 4.75 | 5.58 | 6.975 | |
| Swimming Beaches | .1 - .15 | 2 | 1.9 | 2.85 | 2.79 | 4.19 | |
| Lakes/Boat Docks | .2 - .3 | 8 | 3.8 | 5.7 | 5.58 | 8.37 | |
| Camping | .1 - .15 | 2 | 1.9 | 2.85 | 2.79 | 4.19 | |
| Dog Parks | .20 - .26 | 5 | 3.8 | 4.94 | 5.58 | 7.254 | |
| Paved Trails | 5.25 - 6.3 | 110 | 99.75 | 119.7 | 146.475 | 175.77 | |
| Non-Paved Trails | 5.25 - 6.3 | 110 | 99.75 | 119.7 | 146.475 | 175.77 | |
| All Trails Combined | 10.5 - 12.6 | 220 | 199.5 | 239.4 | 292.95 | 351.54 | |
| Equestrian Trails | 1.5 - 2.0 | 50 | 28.5 | 38 | 41.85 | 55.8 | |
| Motocross Track | 0.05 | 1 | 0.95 | 0.95 | 1.40 | 1.40 | |
| Archery Area | 0.05 | 1 | 0.95 | 0.95 | 1.40 | 1.40 | |
| Outdoor Ice Rinks | .36 - .70 | 3 | 6.84 | 13.30 | 10.04 | 19.53 | |
| Ice Skating Lakes | .36 - .70 | 4 | 6.84 | 13.30 | 10.04 | 19.53 | |
| Sledding Hill | 1.0 - 1.5 | 19 | 19.00 | 28.50 | 27.90 | 41.85 | |
| Cross-country Ski Trail | 4.0 - 5.0 | 75 | 76.00 | 95.00 | 111.60 | 139.50 | |
| Skijoring Trail | .5 - 1.0 | 12 | 9.50 | 19.00 | 13.95 | 27.90 | |
| Dog Sled Trail | .5 - 1.0 | 18 | 9.50 | 19.00 | 13.95 | 27.90 | |
| Indoor Ice Skating Rink | .25 - .32 | 6 | 4.75 | 6.08 | 6.98 | 8.93 | Municipal & Private |
| Swimming Pools | .16 - .26 | 5 | 3.04 | 4.94 | 4.46 | 7.25 | Municipal Only |
| Recreation Centers | .16 - .26 | 4 | 3.04 | 4.94 | 4.46 | 7.25 | |
| Community Schools | NA | 5 | 19.00 | 19.00 | 27.90 | 27.90 | |
| Rifle Range | 0.05 | 1 | 0.95 | 0.95 | 1.4 | 1.4 | |

Anchorage 2020 outlined a broad community vision for Anchorage's future. The **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** is intended to fulfill the goals and objectives established in **Anchorage 2020**. This section provides the broad goals, objectives, physical elements, and critical next steps to rebuild the Parks and Recreation Department.

Section Two: The Plan

Anchorage 2020 outlined a community vision for Anchorage's future. The **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** is intended to fulfill the park-related goals and objectives established in **Anchorage 2020**. This section provides the objectives, physical elements, and critical next steps to rebuild the Parks and Recreation Department.

Chapter 6 Community Vision and Goals. The foundation for the development of a new parks and recreation department and includes a vision and mission statement, eight core values, long-term objectives, short-term actions and policies required to implement the Plan in the first five years.

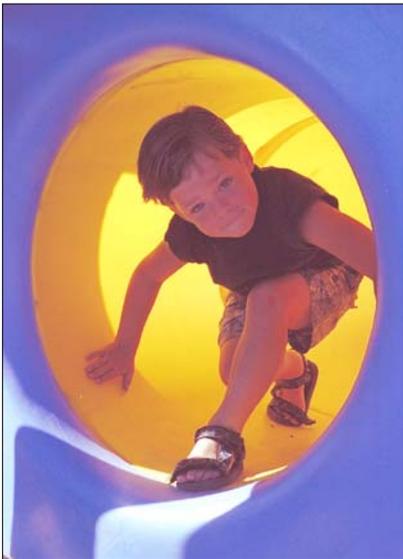
Chapter 7 Systemwide Plan. The physical components and projects necessary to develop a complete integrated system of parks, natural resource use areas, and recreation facilities that are linked to schools, commercial areas, and neighborhoods.

Chapter 8 Park and Recreation Districts. Presents the detail and organizational structure for the establishment of the five subarea park districts in the Anchorage Bowl, including their physical differences, existing park and recreation facilities, and issues and needs. The five subareas should be administered as discrete Park and Recreation Districts with local advisory groups to foster better community involvement.

Chapter 9 Strategic Action Plan. Identifies the strategic actions the Municipality should take in the next two to five years to begin the successful implementation of the **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** in order to ensure that the overall system can meet the community's stated goals well into the future.



Community Vision and Goals



Community Vision, Mission, Goals, Objectives, Actions, and Policies

There is strong public support for maintaining and improving Anchorage's parks, recreation facilities, and natural resource spaces in order to protect residents' quality of life. Public support is defined around residents' key concerns and priorities. Based on the findings from this planning process, a number of strategic directions for the Parks and Recreation Department are proposed to help begin the process of reshaping Anchorage's parks and recreation services.

These strategic directions are intended to empower the full capacity of the Anchorage parks and recreation system; to resolve negative issues revealed in the research process; and to set the stage for development of a high quality, equitable system of parks and recreation facilities and services. To be successful, the Plan will require the focused energy, commitment, and resources of the Municipality, Anchorage School District, local businesses, user groups, and the general population.

On the following pages, the Parks and Recreation Department's vision and mission statement is presented along with eight essential strategies. Each of the strategies was derived from the public involvement process and include individual goals, objectives, and specific actions and policies. These will be necessary to carry out the intent of the Plan and to supplement the goals and policies of **Anchorage 2020** and the **Areawide Trails Plan**.

Implementation of the specific actions and recommendations presented in this chapter will require incremental strategic planning and follow-through on a one- to five-year basis. The most immediate actions and priorities (2004 - 2006) for implementation are presented in Chapter 9's *Strategic Action Plan*.

Together, these goals, objectives, and actions provide a framework for the Municipality to work toward effective implementation of the overall **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan**. To succeed, specific tasks will need to be identified as individual projects are moved forward.

Some policies may overlap more than one strategy but have been listed only once. These policies are intended to guide park planning, funding and management decisions, priorities, and regulatory determinations.

Strategies

Eight strategies have been expressed by the community to serve as the basis for future action and decision-making for Anchorage's parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities. These strategies are the product of a comprehensive and on-going public engagement process. In the following pages, these strategies are described in detail as major goals with long-range objectives, short-term actions, and the policies necessary to implement the Plan. The strategies are not in priority order and should be considered of equal value. The more strategies that can be utilized on specific projects or programs the higher the benefit to the community.

The eight strategies include:

- 1 Improve Maintenance and Stewardship of What We Have
- 2 Private-Public Partnership
- 3 Parks as Community Building Blocks
- 4 Parks as Economic Engines
- 5 Balanced Services and Facilities for a Diverse Community
- 6 Access and Connections
- 7 Stewardship of Natural Resources
- 8 Creating a Strong Parks and Recreation Organization

The **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** is based on public input and extensive research based on best management practices in parks, recreation, and open space planning. The public involvement process revealed that recreation is one of the more personal issues for

Anchorage residents. By working with each other and sometimes through significant disagreement, the community has suggested strategic directions for Anchorage.

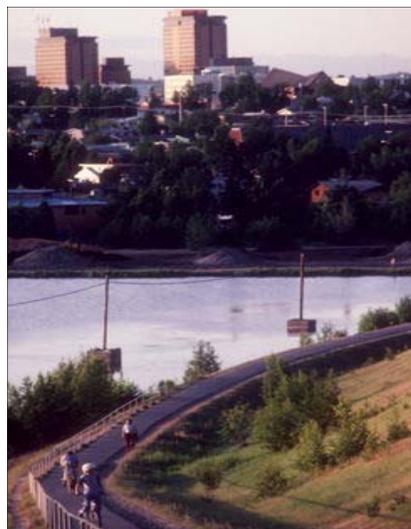
These strategic directions are intended to reshape the Anchorage parks and recreation system; to resolve community issues; and to set the stage for development of a high quality, equitable system of parks and recreation land, facilities, and services. To be successful the Plan will require focused energy, commitment and resources of the Municipality, Anchorage School District, local businesses, and user groups in a strategic framework that envisions creating and maintaining a park, open space, and recreation facility system that is one of the best in the world.

Strategic Framework

Developing the Parks and Recreation Department into an effective and efficient resource for building community support and trust was the constant theme heard throughout the public process.

Parks and recreation facilities, in the public's opinion, are not just a luxury, they are important building blocks to creating a healthy community.

Parks are one of the most visible and positive public services, affect the lives of all age groups, contribute to quality of life, and are participated in voluntarily. In



addition, the park system balances individual growth, community building, economic development, and environmental stewardship at the local level through the following strategic framework.

The mission of Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department is for **"Healthy Parks, Healthy People"** with a clear mandate from the public to ensure that our parks are well maintained and safe. This concept has been translated into the **"Clean & Green"** and **"Safe & Secure"** campaign.



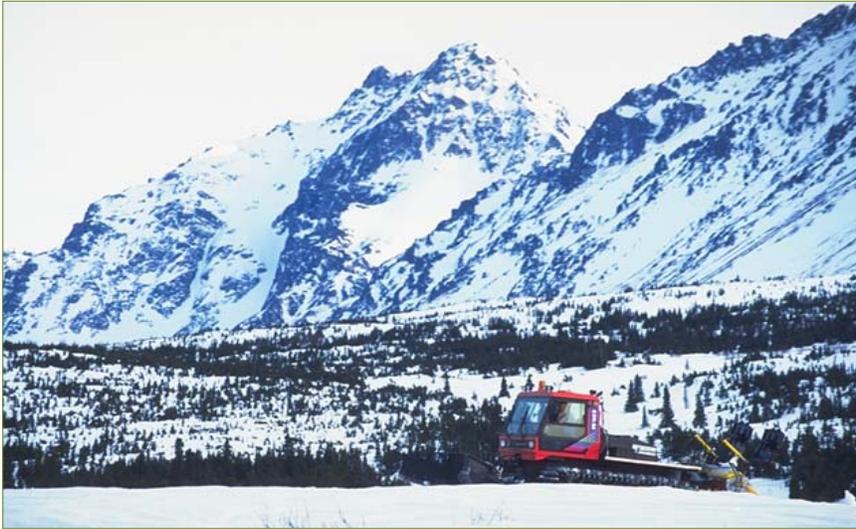
Anchorage's Parks and Recreation Department is recognized for excellence in providing essential quality of life services through People, Parks and Programs for residents and visitors, resulting in: increased leisure opportunities; healthy lifestyles; family involvement; and stewardship for future generations.

MISSION VISION

Park Strategy 1: Improve Maintenance and Stewardship of What We Have

The public's number one concern for the Anchorage parks and recreation system was improving maintenance of existing facilities. When asked how they want their tax dollar to be spent, survey respondents allocated 50 percent towards maintenance.

that can be offered. The Parks and Recreation Department must develop a plan to maintain existing facilities at the quality level expected by the community and ensure proper stewardship of parks and recreation assets under this strategy.



The public's number one concern for the Anchorage parks and recreation system was improving maintenance of existing facilities.

Although the city's amount of parkland, road and trailside landscaping, and school acreage has increased over the last 15 years, maintenance budgets have shrunk. The staff of the Parks and Recreation Department and the Anchorage School District must be provided the tools and the leadership to do a better job of taking care of what we have.

The development of new facilities must be balanced with the need to increase the use and availability of existing facilities that now lay fallow. Long-term maintenance of major facilities has been deferred, leading to a gradual deterioration of the quality and quantity of services

goals

Provide for the continuous maintenance and upgrades of indoor and outdoor facilities to serve all segments of the city.

Improve Maintenance and Stewardship of What We Have Policies

- The Municipality shall provide continuing park and recreation facility maintenance to protect the long-term vitality of facilities and to protect the health and safety of the public.
- The Municipality shall encourage public joint use and shared maintenance of parks and schools for public use.
- Public partnerships with individuals and user groups for park maintenance shall be encouraged to promote cost savings to the Municipality and to enhance public commitment to parks and recreation.



LONG-RANGE OBJECTIVES

Establish facility maintenance as a core service and provide adequate funding level to support quality maintenance services.

Improve existing athletic facilities and recreation facilities so they can sustain increase in activity through better design standards.

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

Establish a partnership between MOA Parks, ASD, and user groups to work together to create a new model for maintenance of parks, schools, grounds, and recreation facilities.

Establish a long-term maintenance endowment with a percentage of new park and recreation construction budget set aside to provide for maintenance and long term upgrades.

Park Strategy 2: Private-Public Partnership

Private-public partnerships are the foundation of a strong parks and recreation department. They provide valuable expertise, resources and support in addition to alternative sources of funding for shrinking budgets. Anchorage has a growing tradition of private-

the necessity of building both a school and a park to serve a single neighborhood.

The Anchorage School District and the Parks and Recreation Department have a history of such cooperation. It is important to strengthen and expand this cooperation to build community vitality and maximize the use of public funds and public facilities.

A new model school standard should be developed that includes clear municipal funding requirements, and operational practices for parks and recreation facilities and public access that can be implemented incrementally as schools are upgraded. New schools should include amenities that would serve public recreational needs for parklands and recreational facilities and be funded through non-school funds such as parks and recreation bonds and park foundations grants.



Utilizing school grounds and facilities for community recreation when school is not in session makes good sense.

public partnerships, which should be expanded and promoted through the establishment of alliances with a variety of organizations, businesses, and non-profits. There is no more important partnership than the long-standing agreements with the Anchorage School District.

The school-park concept is widely accepted around the world. Designing, building, and utilizing school grounds and facilities for community recreation when school is not in session makes good sense since schools and parks are publicly funded facilities. Combining public funds from two different departments to help build and maintain these facilities is both practical and economical. In addition, most schools are located close to home, negating

Public use of school facilities should not interfere with school programs.

Private-Public Partnership Policies

- The Municipality and School District shall, to the extent practicable, develop joint school-park facility areas in order to provide both educational and recreational services to adjacent population in a convenient and efficient manner.
- An equitable cost-sharing policy shall be developed that allows parks and recreation to fund development of those facilities beyond the ASD

goals

To foster private-public partnerships for parks, natural resources, and recreational facilities and to enhance public commitment to parks and recreation.

design guidelines and that ensures that such funded ASD facilities remain available to the public after school priority use.

- Where standard-size neighborhood parks cannot be acquired, school playgrounds, tot-lots, and mini-parks will be developed to meet neighborhood needs.
- The Municipality shall encourage the year-round use of public schools as neighborhood and community centers through extension of partnership agreements with not-for-profit and profit-making groups such as community schools.
- The Municipality shall encourage private-public collaboration for acquisition, development, and maintenance of recreational spaces, parks, sports fields, public use facilities such as shooting ranges, and trails. The use of incentives through Title 21 should be encouraged.
- Standards for new school-parks shall be developed to encourage joint public use of facilities. These standards shall not conflict with approved Educational and Early Development (EED) specifications. The community recognizes that education shall always have the priority over public use of school-park areas.

LONG-RANGE OBJECTIVES

Combine park, recreation, and community facilities with school sites in order to best serve residents of the area and reduce duplicated costs.

Establish School-Park Partnership by developing a joint-use agreement with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, as well as a sound and equitable financial plan for parks and recreation to fund school development beyond that which the state school design standards fund.

The non-profit Community School program will be supported to the extent possible to meet the passive and active recreational needs of Anchorage residents.

Develop high quality athletic fields for outdoor sports with adequate provisions for participants and spectators. Utilize engineered fields at high schools and middle schools to expand the season and allow for wider public use of these facilities. Parks and Recreation funding should be provided to match ASD funding to build such facilities that are to be shared by the public.

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

Municipal and school district representatives should develop new model school-park standards to determine areas where coordination will result in better all-around recreational areas, programming of facility use, and cost-effective means of development and operations. Establish a joint task force to look at areas where coordination can be improved – Community Schools, Municipality, and Anchorage School District.

The Parks and Recreation Department should establish a direct partnership with the Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau, as well as other business organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Anchorage Downtown Partnership, Vision Anchorage, and the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation to develop improved public image, and/or branding for parks and recreation, and to promote tourism use of parks.

Anchorage should partner with winter and summer user groups in the community to explore investing in two or three high quality multiplex sports complexes for tournaments or elite-level play.

Enter into service and facility use agreements with not-for-profit organizations providing recreation services at municipal sites specifying minimum service levels to be provided to the public. Examples include current agreement with the Nordic Ski Association to maintain winter trails and Little League for facility maintenance.

To establish a strong partnership between the Anchorage School District and the Parks and Recreation Department to maximize the utilization of public facilities for Anchorage residents.

Park Strategy 3: Parks as Community Building Blocks

Anchorage 2020 calls for the development of smaller sub-areas strategically located throughout the city. Because this concept has been widely accepted by the public, it is both logical and practical to include parks in this

2020. By creating an operational responsibility level for each park district area, parks and recreation is becoming more responsive to the needs of the smaller sub-communities.



Community members now have a single point of contact in their area, the parks and recreation manager is developing a more intimate knowledge of the community, and a greater sense of responsibility to the region's sub-communities is being created. In addition, the social cohesiveness and community building focus of this approach adds to the strength of the park district focus, creating "social capital" for all of Anchorage. These attributes are leading to increased partnership opportunities and improved community confidence and awareness of the Parks and Recreation Department.

concept. Parks and recreation facilities are one of the few public investments (along with schools, public housing, and streets) that can be made in order to initiate the development of a more decentralized community.

A park and/or recreation center could serve as a focal point for each park district. Connections to trails and other parks, schools, and neighborhoods would establish the park district as a community-gathering place and motivate revitalization of the area and economic development.

The strategy serves as the foundation for a more decentralized parks and recreation organization within each of five subareas identified in **Anchorage**

goals

Provide a variety of safe, pleasant, and distinctive community use parks that are responsive to the diverse needs of its residents, with good access to schools, recreation, natural areas, community facilities, and surrounding neighborhoods.

Parks as Community Building Blocks Policies

- Each subarea park district should have an established community advisory park group made up of representatives from each of the appropriate Community Councils as well as local businesses and user groups that reports to the park commission.
- The Municipality shall acquire buildings or properties that could serve as park or recreation centers within park district boundaries as they become available and as funding allows.
- Connect local activity centers, such as neighborhood schools and community centers with parks, sports fields, greenbelts, and trails, where feasible.

LONG-RANGE OBJECTIVES

Develop a more decentralized parks and recreation organization within each of the five subareas to be responsive to local community needs.

Provide parks and recreation facilities as focal points of neighborhoods and communities.

Community members should have a single point of contact in their subarea park districts.

Support the concept of non-profit community schools in place of community recreational centers to reduce long-term capital and operational costs.

A park and/or recreation center could serve as a focal point for each park district and connections to trails and other parks, schools, and neighborhoods would establish the park district as a community-gathering place.

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

Encourage development of a special events coordinator shared between parks and recreation and ACVB to promote festival and other special events under parks and recreation guidance to promote economic development.

Develop winter recreation centers at key geographic locations to include ice skating, sledding, cross-country skiing trails, warming shelters and fire pits. Develop additional specialized facilities including speed skating oval, a luge run, and other world-class venues capable of hosting international events but designed to meet local needs at appropriate locations.

Work closely with minority, ageing, and special needs populations.

Park Strategy 4: Parks as Community Economic Engines

Parks should be thought of not only as a vital community service, but also as an economic engine. This concept acknowledges the benefits that parks provide in attracting well educated work force, encouraging new businesses to relocate, and reducing health care cost by encouraging a



Anchorage parks and trails. In addition, parks and recreation should partner with winter and summer athletic and event interests in the community to explore investing in two or three high quality multiplex sports complexes for tournaments or elite- level play.

These sports complexes, both winter and summer oriented, would make Anchorage eligible to host state, regional, national, and international events and tournaments potentially attracting thousands of visitors every year. These well-designed venues would be available to local residents most of the year, thus increasing the number of regular season play and practice fields and allowing some existing fields to be converted to other uses or become more accessible to the general public.

healthy lifestyle. In addition, it has been documented that parks increase property values and contribute to the overall quality of life to the community . Visitors are attracted to extend their stay in the community increasing revenues to local businesses as well as increasing municipal revenues.

This strategy suggests that the Parks and Recreation Department should establish a direct partnership with the Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB), as well as other business organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Anchorage Downtown Partnership, and the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) to encourage visitor use, enjoyment, and exploration of

goals

Acknowledge the economic benefits of parks and recreation to the local economy in attracting new businesses, retaining quality workforce, increasing property values, reducing crime, and improving the health of local residents.

Parks as Community Economic Engines Policies

- Title 21 policy should provide guidance and incentives for private investment through the development of appropriate public facilities including but not limited to indoor recreational facilities, parks, recreation facilities, and natural resource areas.
- The need for new recreational athletic facilities shall, to the greatest extent possible, be met through the development of regional sports parks.



LONG-RANGE OBJECTIVES

The Municipality shall partnership with the local business community for mutual benefits and supplemental funding.

Establish working arrangement with ACVB to market and attract international sports competitions and special events that include shared revenues.

Create potential fee-charging scenarios that would allow private-sector or non-profit organizations to construct and operate quality sports complexes in a private-public partnership.

New sports complexes would make Anchorage eligible to host state, regional, national, and international events, potentially attracting thousands of visitors every year.

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

Promote non-profit service/program providers to provide program services citywide and share revenues with the community.

Create a task force between Parks and Recreation, ACVB, and AEDC to develop a new image or branding for the Parks and Recreation Department.

Establish design standards that provide for durable and safe amenities to promote a safe community to increase visitor satisfaction, attract residents, and create a vibrant and exciting city.

Encourage visitor stay in the Anchorage area by one additional day.

Park Strategy 5: Balanced Services and Facilities for a Diverse Community

The 2000 Census shows that nearly 30% of Anchorage's population is made up of ethnic minorities. The Anchorage School District projects that this percentage will grow somewhat rapidly over the next 10 years. Also, as Anchorage matures, families raising children

single-use areas and that some parts of the city are underserved or lacking in basic close-to-home facilities. Lack of access to neighborhood and community parks emerged as some of the main issues in this category. The existing land base must be better managed to meet the needs of a growing urban community while not sacrificing the natural qualities and open space that citizens highly value.



This strategy recognizes it is important that the Parks and Recreation Department address these trends and take a proactive role in addressing community needs and desires. This includes strengthening youth services, senior services, and developing specific strategies to get ethnic minorities involved in parks and recreation as the community partners with the agency. All of these are important for building understanding and respect among diverse groups, strong community ties, and healthy, productive citizens.

Trails and their associated uses are

in Anchorage has become the norm rather than the exception. Anchorage has become a permanent home for many families and youth services have become a high priority item for Anchorage Bowl citizens. A similar trend reveals an aging population in Anchorage. Not only are young working families staying, but retiring workers and seniors are staying in Anchorage as well.

Many residents also recognized an imbalance in the Anchorage Bowl parks system in that participants in organized programs do not have equal access to facilities they need as compared to participants in non-organized recreational activities, that there are too many

goals

Establish, develop, manage, and maintain a balanced system of parks, greenbelts, and trails for year-round utilization that meets neighborhood and community-wide needs.

Balanced Services and Facilities for a Diverse Community Policies

- Deficiencies in neighborhood and community parks will be used in setting priorities for capital improvement programming based on the minimum LOS standard.
- Parks and recreational facility development shall be coordinated with other municipal, state, and federal agencies, particularly the Anchorage School District.
- Where points of access are created to neighborhood, community and special use areas, particularly where field sports and court spaces are provided, adequate parking is to be established within the park or such means to minimize parking requirements such as connection to transit, trails or cooperative agreements. This is to be done at the same time when the fields, courts, or related space is developed in order to reduce traffic impacts on the surrounding neighborhood.
- The Municipality shall adopt LOS standards for parks, recreation facilities, and trails.
- If standard size neighborhood parks cannot be acquired, small park-type facilities, such as mini-parks are to be primarily concentrated within high-density residential areas.
- Develop an acquisition strategy to secure sufficient and suitable public lands for parks, sports fields, greenbelts, open space, trails, and other public facilities based upon applicable LOS standards as well as natural resource function and safe walking distances.

LONG-RANGE OBJECTIVES

A balanced distribution of neighborhood and community parks will be developed throughout Anchorage.

Minimum standards for each type of park should be met in all areas of the Municipality.

Within the urban setting, neighborhood parks will be provided within walking distances of residential areas. Within lower density suburban and rural settings, neighborhood parks may provide at distances generally not exceeding a mile for most residences.

Minimize costs of recreational development through multiple use of facilities and coordinating uses by various recreational groups.

Provide for a balance of facilities to meet the diverse needs of the community.

- Municipal land acquired for or converted to long-term or permanent park or recreational uses shall be officially dedicated as parkland.
- The Municipality shall encourage new development to provide minimum LOS standards for Neighborhood and Community Use areas where possible.

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

Master plans will need to be prepared for all large community and special use parks, which have not been so planned to date.

Natural resource management plans will be prepared for all large Natural Resource Use areas that have not been planned to date.

Build engineered fields on high school football facilities to extend the use and capacity.

Adopt park standards and design guidelines for parks, facilities, open space, and trails that meet the specific safety and performance criteria of user groups, and that provide a clear model for developing local parks and recreational facilities.

Park Strategy 6: Access and Connections

Anchorage's most valued and treasured park system asset. They are recognized by residents and visitors as attractions, places to exercise, see scenery and wildlife, meet neighbors and friends, enjoy family outings, or walk the dog. Anchorage has an excellent trail system but there are missing gaps that limit the ability to connect

Neighborhood-level connections where children are safe to travel from home to school to park, and that encourage residents to walk, run, and enjoy their neighborhood, are of notable value.

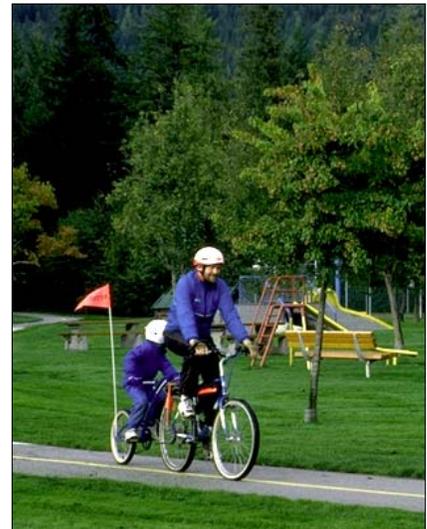
It is important that the Parks and Recreation Department and city planners adopt this strategy as expressed so clearly by the community. Efforts should be made to provide the missing connectors—to fill the gaps in the trail system and to provide additional trails whenever feasible.



The long-range development of Anchorage trails is implemented primarily through the [Anchorage Areawide Trails Plan](#) as administered by the Transportation Planning Division.

parks, open space, schools, shops, and neighborhoods.

Anchorage Bowl stakeholders agree that connecting existing parks, greenbelts, and open spaces is important. Connectivity, in general, emerged as an important issue for a variety of reasons. Some stakeholders felt greenbelt connections were important for wildlife movement. Others felt connectivity was important for transportation value. Still others viewed connectivity of parks, trails, and open space as important to their recreation-oriented lifestyle. The ability to ride a bike, walk, run, or ski from one end of the city to the other without getting on a road was a matter of great pride and seemingly valued by all.



goals

Create a pedestrian-oriented system of parks and natural resource greenways linking open spaces and residential neighborhoods and existing and proposed parklands and school sites.

Access and Connections Policies

- The municipal park and greenbelt system shall facilitate development of an integrated trail system where it is appropriate to provide trail linkages between neighborhoods, schools, park sites, major public facilities and regional trails.
- The Municipality has establish a formal Trail Watch organization and shall continue to support to appropriate levels to ensure the safety of all trail users.
- Work with the Alaska Division of Parks and Chugach State Park to preserve and protect public access points through Title 21 dedication and the platting process. The 2002 [Chugach State Park Access Inventory](#) is the most current guide for preserving new state park access and should be used to determine appropriate access points.

LONG-RANGE OBJECTIVES

Connections between parks – especially large community and special use areas – will be established via the natural resource use areas (greenbelt and linear park system).

Develop programs to ensure that all user groups feel safe using trails for recreation and transportation.

Connectivity emerged as an important issue for several reasons—greenbelt connections, wildlife movement, transportation value, and recreation.

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

Establish a scenic trail corridor system using existing greenbelts to promote visitors to stay an extra day in Anchorage and play on our trails and parks and develop an Anchorage parks and trails brochure and distribution to promote tourism in Anchorage.

Continue to support Trail Watch with leadership and adequate funding.

Enhance trail signage and create trail stations for services on trails.

Acquire lands to complete any gaps in the existing system through land transfers from other municipal agencies through land purchase, negotiated easements, or New Plat easements.

Provide for full and consistent implementation of the Areawide Trails Plan.
Improve trail maintenance and safety.

Park Strategy 7: Stewardship of Natural Resources

Natural resource areas are some of the most important lands in the Anchorage Bowl. Besides providing for community definition and separation of land uses and providing a sense of wilderness close to home, the parks,



In order to attain the enhanced system envisioned by the community, a targeted acquisition strategy needs to be used. The Municipality should “plan by purpose” to identify the critical parcels of land that need to be acquired to attain improved connectivity, sufficient public access to Chugach State Park, an equitable balance of facilities, and an appropriate number of neighborhood parks. Anchorage should utilize, where practical, the [Living with Wildlife Plan](#) in implementation of the Park Plan Strategies. This strategy also envisions converting designated parklands to dedicated parklands as a top priority of the Municipality in order to protect the current system of parks, natural open spaces, and recreation facilities so that any new targets, strategies, or mechanisms are not developed in vain.

greenbelts, and natural areas contribute to the quality of the local environment. The natural systems present in Anchorage allow wildlife to pass through and make their homes among Anchorage residents. Wetlands, rivers, and streams contribute to water quality and provide valuable habitat for salmon and other aquatic wildlife. Forests clean the air and provide shade and cooling on hot days and an escape from the urban lifestyle.

goals

Establish an integrated open space network throughout the community based upon existing natural resource space patterns and lands which are ecologically valuable and that preserves and enhances Anchorage’s scenic vistas, fish, wildlife, and plant habitats and their ecological functions and values.

Stewardship of Natural Resources Policies

- The Municipality shall establish natural resource preservation areas for the protection of unique land and water relationships, fish and wildlife habitats, high-value wetlands, riparian corridors, and vistas.
- Easements shall be set aside for trail connections where trails in the **Areawide Trails Plan** and the linear segments of the natural resource greenbelt and linear park system coincide.
- Amend land use regulations and relevant plans to incorporate policies and procedures, management plans, and standards for natural resource space. Encourage private-public collaboration methods for natural open space protection.
- Promote and encourage the identification and conservation of natural resource spaces, including minimum impact access improvements to greenbelts, Chugach State Park, Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge, and Far North Bicentennial Park consistent with adopted municipal, state and federal plans.
- Subdivision plats and site development plans shall encourage designs that enhance or preserve scenic views and other significant natural features in accordance with applicable goals, policies, and strategies.
- Establish an advisory committee to address management, acquisition, and development of Natural Resource Use areas for issues such as stormwater management and flood control.

LONG-RANGE OBJECTIVES

Critical wetlands and habitat areas will be set aside as Natural Resource Preservation areas

Greenbelts will be established for all the major creeks in the area, including Chester, Campbell, Fish, Ship, Little Campbell, Rabbit, Little Rabbit, Furrow, and Potter Creeks as they become available.

Promote the use of geologic hazard areas and marginal land for parks, recreation, and natural resource space.

Incorporate elements of the State's Living with Wildlife Plan goals and objectives when developing parks and recreation facilities.

Parks, trails and recreation facilities within the state's mapped bear habitat shall consider adopting provision to avoid and minimize bear conflicts and impacts to bear habitat where possible.

- Convert designated parkland to dedicated parkland where appropriate and consistent with adopted Master Plans.

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

Provide enhanced and dispersed coastal access through completion of the coastal trail system.

Prepare natural resource plans for large parks and greenbelts including Far North Bicentennial Park, Kincaid Park, Section 36 Park, Campbell Park, Russian Jack Springs Park and Ship, Rabbit, Little Rabbit, and Potter Creeks, to identify provisions for access, recreational development, and environmental protection.

Important natural areas not owned by the Municipality should be purchased by working with local land trusts and private property owners to acquire conservation easements, development rights, or out-right purchases as they become available.

Acquire land on both sides of all of major streams within the Municipality as it becomes available.

Identify natural resource areas for priority protection based on their function, community value, availability and acquire as they become available based on availability of funding.

The Natural Resource Use areas (greenbelt and linear park system) will be further established.

Park Strategy 8: Creating a Strong Parks and Recreation Organization

For Anchorage to fully benefit from its parks and recreation system, the Municipality needs to rebuild organizational capacity. Anchorage citizens want their property tax investments to go further and for the Municipality to institute strong leadership, efficient processes, clearly written policies and procedures, an effective budgeting process, and a dynamic Parks and Recreation Commission. Citizens want to see their dollars at

identity of the Parks and Recreation Department into a source of pride and appreciation by the community.

To accomplish this task, Mayor Begich elevated parks and recreation to department-level status under the Office of Economic and Community Development and is considering specifying expanded duties for the Parks and Recreation Commission. This will allow the Commission to exercise strong leadership and authority, and consider the community's broad needs effectively while remaining advisory in status.

This will require a thorough review of policies and procedures to make certain that all park and neighborhood issues are resolved at the commission level prior to Assembly action. Also, a professional, specialized staff and a structure that matches the core services offered to the community (and correspondingly an equitable fee structure) have begun to be assembled, creating a systemwide approach that responds to residents' needs.



work stewarding and enhancing the parks and recreational programs they care about and improving Anchorage's quality of life.

After more than a decade of inconsistent policy-making and under-funding, the Municipality has begun to rebuild and reorganize the Parks and Recreation Department in order to rebuild community faith in the organization. Professional, efficient reorganization has set the stage for sweeping improvements in the Anchorage Bowl parks and recreation system. It is seen as the strategy to quickly change the



goals

Provide a strong park and recreation organization that is responsive to local community needs and that engages the community in meaningful public process at all levels of park planning, design, implementation, and management.

Creating a Strong Parks and Recreation Organization Policies

- The Parks and Recreation Department, in cooperation with other municipal, state, and federal departments, shall be the lead agency for park and recreation planning, operation, and maintenance.
- Neighborhood parks and recreation facilities will be designed and developed in accordance with the expressed interests of area residents. The five park district subareas shall establish a representative advisory group to recommend new park and recreation facility development on an annual basis.
- Community involvement and input shall be actively solicited to ensure a responsive and representative parks and recreation program and to ensure that parks are sited to provide maximum user benefit with a minimum of community disturbance.
- The Municipality shall establish formal policies and procedures for the Park and Recreation Commission.
- The Municipality shall establish annual budget procedures based on delivery of services.
- The Municipality shall establish a fiscal policy to develop and implement equitable funding mechanisms for providing appropriate levels of public services and facilities, including:
 - Adopt LOS and Natural Resource Function standards for use as the basis for infrastructure priorities and funding

LONG-RANGE OBJECTIVES

Establish a sustainable and dedicated revenue stream for the Parks and Recreation Department.

Engage a broad range of public input in park planning issues and decisions and ensure that park and neighborhood issues are resolved at the Parks and Recreation Commission level prior to Assembly action.

Privatize those services and functions that can be effectively provided by private contracting services.

Develop a strong partnership/volunteerism process that provides a balanced and equitable opportunity to all volunteer groups.

- New park development should be required to pay for additional cost to maintain and repair the facility.
- Design municipal facilities frequented by the public, particularly schools, to accommodate year-round multi-purpose activities.
- Municipal land acquired for or converted to long-term permanent park or recreational uses shall be officially dedicated as parkland.
- Encourage private-public collaboration for acquisition, development, and maintenance of recreational spaces, parks, sports fields, public use facilities, and trails.

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

Adopt the Core Service Model for parks and recreation and identify the basic programs.

Develop a revised fee policy that utilizes the Core Service Model and creates a fair and equitable fee structure.

Establish a "parks foundation" to help provide focus, leadership and name recognition to the importance of issues related to parks and recreation.

Develop a "friends of parks" organization to continue support for building strong parks.

Establish support for park bonds through the selection of CIP that meets the broad community support necessary for success.

Conduct annual public surveys to identify issues related to how well parks and recreation is meeting park user interest including new programs, user fee policies, bond support, and core services.

Establish partnerships with other municipal departments in order to assess and promote efficiencies for park planning, management, maintenance and safety responsibilities (i.e., HLB, Police, Fire, Health and Human Services, PM & E, street maintenance etc.).

Establish a joint working group with local governmental agencies responsible for land management issues, including but not limited to representatives from Chugach State Park, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, BLM, Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, the Military, and other agencies.

Establish a consistent and reliable funding source for sustainable park operations, maintenance, and acquisition.



Municipal Parks-Systemwide Plan

Introduction



Note: This plan is intended to provide guidance for municipal owned and managed facilities.

Anchorage 2020 is intended to provide guidance and direction to land usage patterns and densities, and physical development in the Anchorage Bowl. The **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan**, focuses on the basic needs for a healthy and vibrant community promoting individual, community, environmental and economic benefits. The function of a park and natural resource system within Anchorage is to provide space for a range of leisure activities and to retain a dimension of the natural environment as part of the overall design of the community landscape.

Population pressures and changing leisure activities have created needs for additional recreational space and facilities. The establishment of a functional parks, recreation and natural resource system is key to meeting growing community needs in Anchorage. Anchorage has a finite amount of land available upon which to accommodate future population growth and economic expansion. Competition for land for residential subdivision, industry, retail, public facilities and many other uses will continue. It is important that appropriate lands be dedicated

for parks, recreation facilities, natural resources and trails. The **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** addresses the land needs, geographic distribution and spatial relationships of parks, recreation facilities, natural resources and trails to other land uses within the Anchorage Bowl.

Detailed descriptions and analysis of the four inter-related park elements, listed in the blue box to the right, are contained here in the **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** and in the **Areawide Trails Plan**. As proposed in these plans, the parks, recreation facilities, and natural resources are unified into a single system with trails along natural resource corridors (greenbelts) forming links among the major parks, educational facilities and local neighborhoods. When these plans are implemented, most residents will be able to have recreation opportunities close to their home with connections to parks throughout the Anchorage Bowl.

Anchorage, while having a great system, could better address current recreation demand if new strategies for funding were applied that would stretch every dollar that comes from the existing tax base. Strategies may include maximizing use of and better support for volunteer efforts, expanded and diversified funding from both public and private sources, and building support within the community. Employing these strategies will be especially helpful if population growth is strong, bringing significant new recreation demands especially in areas of higher residential density.

Parks, whether serving a single neighborhood or a larger community, are planned according to a series of standards with a minimum and recommended Level of Services (LOS). The acreage allocations for parks are directly related to the population of each of the five subareas or Park Districts. However, the natural resource system is based on environmental, social, and recreational values, which are not necessarily tied to population. These values include protection of such natural resource areas as stream corridors, floodways, wetlands, steep slopes, seismic hazards, and critical habitat.

Acquisition of parks, recreation facilities, natural resources and trails will vary from fee simple purchase to dedication of easements that will be consistent to Title 21. Map 1, Anchorage Bowl Park System, graphically depicts MOA parks, recreation facilities, natural resources and trails that are components of this system. (See **Appendix A for a full inventory of parks and facilities.**) This Plan and the corresponding map are meant to provide a general direction to the development of the Municipality's parks, recreation facilities, natural resources, and

trails in terms of acquisition, development, and related land use decisions.

The following pages outline a systemwide plan for park upgrades, new parks, natural resources, recreation facilities, and trails needed to continue Anchorage's tradition of a great park system. The projects have been identified based on meeting a balance between the high and low LOS. They are not placed in any priority. Prioritizing of the projects will be completed after a public review period and will be accomplished under the leadership of the Park and Recreation Department using staff and the Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) and the Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

The **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** contains a system of four inter-related elements:

- Parks
- Recreation Facilities
- Natural Resources (greenbelts and other natural open space)
- Trails and Access

All of these elements fit together to form a park and recreation system that is enjoyed by the entire community. Anchorage's parks, natural resource areas, and recreation facilities provide broad benefits to the community including individual, social, economic, and environmental benefits. Residents place a high value on these facilities and services and have grown to expect high standards from the Municipality. The local economy benefits through attracting and maintaining an educated and healthy workforce; the local tourism industry benefits through

Elements

The function of a natural resource system within Anchorage is to provide space for leisure activities and to retain a dimension of the natural environment.

**Figure 14. Anchorage Bowl Park and Recreation Needs Assessment by Acres
Number of acres per 1,000 population**

| Park Classification | LOS Range 1,000 People | MOA Current Park Acreages | 2003 MIN LOS | 2003 REC LOS | 2020 MIN LOS | 2020 REC LOS |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Neighborhood Use Areas | 1.5-2.5 | 238 | -47 | -237 | -180 | -459 |
| Community Use Areas | 1.5-2.5 | 343 | +58 | -132 | -75 | -354 |
| Special Use Areas | 4.5-7.0 | 1,337 | +482 | +7 | +82 | -615 |
| Total Park Acreage Needs | 7.5-12.0 | 2,018 | +587 | -362 | -173 | -1428 |

**Note: Natural Resource Use lands are not calculated as part of LOS. These Natural Resource Use lands total 8,911 acres, giving Anchorage bowl residents 10,829 total park acres.*

The Park System

Parks today serve a multitude of uses for both passive and active recreation for people of all ages. The park system is composed of properties that vary in size, function, service area and development. Anchorage’s parks, natural open space, greenbelts, trails, and access to thousands of acres of wilderness give special character to the city. In return, parks add charm to neighborhoods, increase property values, and provide a balance between nature and urban development.

The standards divide parks into four classifications based on the specific functions that they serve. Figure 14 provides a listing of the park standards utilized for the Anchorage Bowl along with existing supply and current and future needs.

Issues

In total acreage, Anchorage would at first appear to have a substantial amount of parkland with which to accommodate future population needs. Currently the Anchorage Bowl has over 10,000 acres in municipal parks and natural resource areas. The greatest portion of that acreage is in three large parks—Far North Bicentennial Park, Kincaid Park, and Ruth Arcand Park.

The foundation of a good park system is at the neighborhood and community use area. Current and future needs for neighborhood and community use parkland vary within the Anchorage Bowl.

By using the parkland standards, current and projected parkland needs are identified for each of the five subarea park districts. Priorities are established to focus near-term park acquisition in areas where current needs are greatest.

In regard to land acreage needs, and relative geographic distribution, there is an ample amount of Special Use and Natural Resource Use areas to meet current and future population needs. This is particularly true if the Chugach State Park and the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge are considered. Natural Resource Use areas are limited by the existing amount of natural lands that are present in a community and no standard is recommended. There are some remaining wetlands and stream corridors that should be acquired to complete greenbelts, but the overall LOS will decline as the population increases. There is an adequate supply of Special Use areas, especially if athletic facilities are upgraded with engineered fields to increase durability and expand use and

Note: The LOS shown above illustrates the need for park acreage for each of the park classifications based on the minimum and high LOS. Neighborhood and Community Use areas should be analyzed at the subarea park district level while Special Use areas should be evaluated for services to the Anchorage Bowl. Natural Resource Use areas do not have an adopted LOS and have not been shown. A (+) indicates a surplus acreage and a (-) indicates a shortage or need.

a greater emphasis is placed on cooperation and joint use of facilities.

Direction of Municipal Program

The direction of the municipal park program should be towards increased development of existing parkland especially those areas that do not have facilities, increased spatial efficiency on existing developed parks, and increased cooperation with the school district using elementary schools to meet neighborhood use needs and middle and high schools to meet athletic and community use needs. The focus of parkland acquisition will be towards eliminating gaps in the natural resource greenbelt system and in acquiring additional community use parks to promote economic development and community support.

Unlike parkland acquisition over the last 20 years, which was mostly public land transferred to the Municipality, new acquisitions will be primarily privately owned lands, in most instances, by fee simple purchase. Higher acquisition costs because of shrinking land supply will require careful evaluation of sites to be considered for additional parkland. Strategies, listed in the blue box at right, will be employed to administer acquisitions.

Use of these strategies will result in a well-balanced, equitable park system that will provide recreation opportunities accessible to all age groups.

PARK ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

- Use of Heritage Land Bank land resources to acquire lands of high public value for parks natural resource use areas and greenbelts.
- Use of private-public partnerships with land trusts, a park foundation, and a friends of parks group to acquire private parcels
- Use of CIP process to fund matching portion of private contributions for critical natural resource acquisitions
- Use of portions of natural resource reserve land for recreational facilities where environmentally suitable and appropriately located
- Utilization of school site standards for site selection for joint school-park use

Park Classifications and Descriptions

1. Neighborhood Use

These areas are close to home within neighborhoods where residential density is higher. They include areas for informal play and family and community building, and they create a sense of identity to neighborhoods. Neighborhood parks form the backbone of the park system and are typically five to ten acres (See Appendix B). Mini-parks are smaller neighborhood use areas intended to meet the need when land is not available for a larger neighborhood park. Mini-parks can be between one to five acres in size.



Neighborhood parks form the backbone of the park system and create a sense of community for residents.

Recommendations for Level of Service

- The minimum LOS shall be 1.5 acres per 1,000 population.
- The desired LOS shall be 2.5 acres per 1,000 population.

Map 2, Neighborhood Use Areas, illustrates the existing supply of parks along with the recommended service areas for each region. The Anchorage Bowl currently has 238 acres of Neighborhood Use areas. To provide a balanced system at the minimum LOS, Anchorage needs 47 additional acres today and 180 acres by 2020. At the higher LOS, Anchorage needs 237 acres today and 459 acres by 2020. (See Figure 15.)

Part of these neighborhood needs can be met through Community Use areas and the use of elementary schools. If elementary school sites were upgraded with public facilities and with formal cooperative use agreements included as part of the system, Anchorage would have a sufficient supply of close to home parks through 2020.

Strategies for improvement include:

Improve Existing Park Deficiencies

- Continue to upgrade existing parks and expand facilities where possible to meet ADA and safety issues.
- Develop new facilities in parks where these are limited, including the use of some natural resource lands.

School-Park Cooperative Agreement

- Develop joint-use agreement with ASD to expand and upgrade play areas and fields at elementary schools.
- Develop school-park design standards and demonstration projects for parks adjacent to elementary schools.
- Encourage new schools to jointly develop as school-park facilities with shared funding responsibilities.
- Where feasible, develop full-size gyms in every new and renovated elementary school with Parks being paid by non-school funds additional cost to ASD.
- Identify and maintain stable funding sources for youth, before and after school programs, summer programs and sports and recreation activities.

Acquire Land and Develop New Parks

- Acquire new parkland from HLB or through purchase of private lands that are located in targeted high-residential development areas per **Anchorage 2020**.

Figure 15. Neighborhood Use Needs Assessment by Acres per 1,000 population

| Neighborhood Use by Subareas | MOA Existing Inventory | 2003 Need LOS 1.5 MIN | 2003 Need LOS 2.5 REC | 2020 Need LOS 1.5 MIN | 2020 Need LOS 2.5 REC |
|------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Central | 20 | -35 | -71 | -58 | -110 |
| Northeast | 77 | -28 | -97 | -48 | -132 |
| Northwest | 85 | 24 | -16 | -7 | -69 |
| Southeast | 18 | -10 | -29 | -36 | -71 |
| Southwest | 38 | 1 | -23 | -31 | -77 |
| Total | 238 | -47 | -237 | -180 | -459 |

- Coordinate park acquisition per Title 21.

** Note: Quantiles are calculated without using elementary school sites as neighborhood use parks. The inclusion of elementary schools would meet minimum LOS through 2020.*

Develop and Improve Access, Trails and Connections

- Continue to upgrade trails and pathway systems to safely connect neighborhood use areas with local schools, homes, and commercial areas.
- Site new parks close to targeted residential growth neighborhoods to reduce major road crossings and improve pedestrian access.
- Connect neighborhood use areas to the larger trail network to improve transportation and connectivity.

2. Community Use Area

Community parks are larger in size and serve a broader purpose and a larger segment of the population than neighborhood parks (see Appendix B). These include community parks and town center parks. Their focus is on meeting the recreation needs of several neighborhoods or a large section of the community, as well as preserving unique landscapes or natural use areas. They allow for group activities and offer other recreational opportunities not feasible, nor perhaps desirable, at the neighborhood level.

The primary purpose of a community park is to provide opportunities for social contact with a wide variety of members of different neighborhoods, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. These parks meet the specialized needs of a broader community, have higher technical design requirements, provide a sense of community, and increase economic development potential. Like neighborhood parks, there should be a balance between active and passive recreation activities. A typical community park should have a minimum of 10 acres and ideally 20 to 50 acres.



With neighborhood parks and community use areas, there should be a balance between active and passive recreation activities.

Recommendations for Level of Service

- The minimum LOS shall be 1.5 acres per 1,000 population.
- The desired LOS shall be 2.5 acres per 1,000 population.

Map 3, Community Use Areas, illustrates the existing supply of parks along with the recommended service areas for each region. The Anchorage Bowl currently has 343 acres of Community Use areas. To provide a balanced system areawide at the minimum LOS Anchorage has sufficient parks today but will be deficient by 75 acres by 2020 in the Central, Southeast, and Southwest subareas. At the higher LOS, Anchorage needs 132 acres today and 354 acres with deficiencies

in all subareas by 2020. If middle school sites were upgraded with public facilities and included as part of the system, Anchorage would have a sufficient supply of Community Use areas at the minimum LOS but would still need additional parkland by 2020 at the higher level. (See Figure 16.)

Strategies for improvement include:

Improve Existing Park Deficiencies

- Continue to upgrade existing parks and expand facilities where possible, to improve community use, meet ADA and safety issues including the redesign and development of Delaney, Midtown, Town Square, Sullivan-Westchester Lagoon, Lyn Ary, Taku Lake, Campbell, Cheney Lake, Goose Lake, Russian Jack Springs, and Jewel Lake Parks.
- Develop new facilities in reserved parks that are without facilities, including the use of some Natural Resource lands in South Anchorage and Section 36

School-Park Cooperative Agreement

- Develop joint-use agreement with ASD to expand and upgrade community use areas and fields at middle schools
- Develop school-park design standards and demonstration projects for parks adjacent to middle schools. The development of the Muldoon Middle School should continue to develop as a demonstration project.
- Require new middle schools to jointly develop as school-park facilities with shared funding responsibilities.
- Upgrade existing middle school facilities to meet Community Use needs.

Figure 16. Community Use Needs Assessment by Acres per 1,000 population

| Community Use by Subareas | MOA Existing Inventory | 2003 Need LOS 1.5 MIN | 2003 Need LOS 2.5 REC | 2020 Need LOS 1.5 MIN | 2020 Need LOS 2.5 REC |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Central | 17 | -38 | -74 | -61 | -113 |
| Northeast | 152 | 47 | -22 | 27 | -57 |
| Northwest | 100 | 39 | -1 | 8 | -54 |
| Southeast | 20 | -8 | -27 | -34 | -69 |
| Southwest | 54 | 17 | -7 | -15 | -61 |
| Total | 343 | 58 | -132 | -75 | -354 |

Acquire Land and Develop New Parks

- Acquire new parkland from HLB or through purchase of private lands that are located in targeted residential redevelopment areas per **Anchorage 2020**.
- Establish land use regulations through Title 21 to encourage development in the targeted zones prior to park investment.
- Encourage community involvement at all levels of park planning, operation, and maintenance to include the appropriate Community Councils, as well as local businesses and user groups.
- Promote winter recreation and tourism by creating Winter Recreation areas, or “destination” venues, at key locations, including Westchester Lagoon, Russian Jack Springs, Centennial, Far North Bicentennial, and

Kincaid Parks.

Develop and Improve Access, Trails, and Connections

- Continue to upgrade trails and path system to safely connect Community Use areas with parks, schools, homes and shops.
- Site new community parks adjacent or close to major trails.
- Connect Community Use areas to the larger trail network to improve transportation and connectivity. The Special Use classification covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities that provide a single specialized use such as an equestrian center, a golf course, sports park, indoor recreation center, or botanical garden. These areas are used for athletic tournaments and events, highly organized activities, and activities with special requirements. These provide for economic as well as social and physical benefits to the

Note: If middle school sites are included, the MIN LOS will be met through 2020.



3. Special Use Areas

community. These areas have specialized or unique maintenance and management requirements; specific game/field or event preparation on a regular basis; activities limited to one or two purposes only; some benches, signs and beautification improvements requiring a higher level of maintenance; low-level lighting; encourage informal uses and health-related activities. Special uses generally fall into three categories:

- Outdoor Recreation Facilities
- Historic/Cultural/Social Sites
- Indoors Recreation Facilities.

Recommendations for Level of Service

- The minimum LOS shall be 4.5 acres per 1,000 population.
- The desired LOS shall be 7.0 acres per 1,000 population.

The Special Use Maps 4 and 5, Outdoor Athletic Facilities and Indoor Recreation Facilities and Winter Use, illustrate the existing supply of Special Use areas, along with the recommended service



areas for each region. The Anchorage Bowl currently has 1,337 acres of Special Use areas. Special Use areas are intended to serve a wider range of the community than individual subareas, with travel times of up to 30 minutes. These Special Use areas should have a balanced distribution in each of the subareas.

Currently Anchorage has a LOS for many facilities that matches the recommended higher rate of LOS. At the minimum LOS, Anchorage has sufficient areas today and through 2020. At the higher LOS, Anchorage has adequate facilities for today but will need 615 acres by 2020. If high school sites and some key facilities were upgraded with engineered fields to expand the season and increase use, Anchorage would have a sufficient supply of facilities to meet demand through 2020. This would provide high quality, durable facilities. (See Figures 17, 18, 19, and 20.)

Strategies for improvement include:

Outdoor Recreation Facilities

- Continue to upgrade existing athletic Special Use

Figure 17. Summer Recreation Facility Use Needs Assessment by Number of Facilities per 10,000 population

| Athletic Facilities | LOS Range | MOA Existing Inventory | 2003 Need LOS MIN | 2003 Need LOS REC | 2020 Need LOS MIN | 2020 Need LOS REC |
|-------------------------|------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Baseball/ Little League | 1.5 – 2.0 | 39 | +10.5 | +1 | -2.8 | -16.8 |
| Softball | .75 – 1.25 | 19 | +4.75 | -4.75 | -2 | -16 |
| Soccer | 1.75 – 2.0 | 34 | 0 | -4 | -15 | -22 |
| Basketball Courts | 1.0 – 2.0 | 11 | -8 | -27 | -17 | -45 |
| Tennis Courts | 1.5 – 2.0 | 42 | +13 | +4 | 0 | -14 |
| Golf Course | .2 - .4 | 4 | 0 | -3.6 | -1.5 | -7 |

Figure 18. Winter Recreation Use Needs Assessment by Number of Facilities (or in miles where indicated) per 10,000 population

| Winter Recreation Facilities | LOS Range | MOA Existing Inventory | 2003 Need Min. LOS | 2003 Need High LOS | 2020 Need Min. LOS | 2020 Need High LOS |
|------------------------------|-----------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Outdoor Ice Skating Rinks | .36 -.70 | 3 | -4 | -10 | -7 | -16 |
| Outdoor Skating Lakes | .36 -.70 | 4 | -3 | -9 | -6 | -15 |
| Sledding Hill | 1.0 – 1.5 | 19 | 0 | -9 | -9 | -23 |
| Cross-country Ski Trail | 4.0 – 5.0 | 75 Miles | -1 | -20 | -36 | -64 |
| Skijoring Trail | .5 – 1.0 | 12 Miles | +2.5 | -7 | -2 | -16 |

areas and expand facilities where possible to improve maintenance and durability of fields. This includes Anchorage Football Stadium, Mulcahy Baseball Stadium, Kosinski Fields, Russian Jack Springs golf greens and fields, Ruth Arcand fields, De La Vega, South Anchorage Sports, and Chuck Albrecht fields.

- Utilize engineered fields in high use areas such as soccer fields and baseball infields to reduce maintenance and expand use periods.
- Develop seasonal sports complexes at key areas designed to meet local recreation needs but capable of hosting national and international events. This could include Kincaid and Far North Bicentennial Parks as Nordic ski centers, a new Kincaid soccer complex, and Russian Jack Springs softball complex.
- Improve and expand other recreational areas to serve both local and tourism needs, including Centennial campgrounds, Hillside ski area, Kincaid, Russian Jack and Far North Nordic skiing, skijoring trails, skateboard parks, and dog parks.
- Develop new facilities in parks where they are lacking, including the use of some

Natural Resource lands. This includes Kincaid, Far North Bicentennial, and Ruth Arcand Parks.

- Develop and maintain winter recreation facilities to include ice skating on lakes or outdoor rinks, sledding hills, cross-country skiing and skijoring trails, shelters, and warming areas. The areas should be distributed throughout the Bowl with the following potential locations:
 - Kincaid Park
 - Sullivan Westchester Lagoon
 - Russian Jack Spring Park
 - Far North Bicentennial Park
 - Connors Lake
 - Centennial Park
 - Goose Lake
 - Cheney Lake
 - Jewel Lake
 - Section 36
 - Ruth Arcand Park
 - Delaney Park Strip

Historic/Cultural/Social Facilities

- Continue to upgrade and support existing historic and cultural sites.
- Identify potential new sites that should be preserved for historic value in the Anchorage Bowl. This could include old homestead property, native sites, or



The Municipality should utilize engineered fields in high use areas such as soccer fields and baseball infields to reduce maintenance and expand use.

Figure 19. Indoor Recreation Use Needs Assessment by Number of Facilities per 10,000 population

| Indoor Recreation Facilities | LOS Range | MOA Existing Inventory | 2003 Need MIN LOS | 2003 Need REC LOS | 2020 Need MIN LOS | 2020 Need REC LOS |
|------------------------------|-----------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Indoor Skating Rink | .25 -.32 | 6 | +1.25 | 0 | -1.0 | -3 |
| Swimming Pool | .16 -.26 | 5 | +2 | 0 | +5 | -2 |
| Recreation Center | .16 -.26 | 4 | +1 | -1 | -.5 | -3 |

Note: Athletic facilities in single-use complexes of four or more fields are intended to meet the broad community needs and shall not be calculated by subarea park district.

historic buildings.

- Work with BLM and other outdoor education groups to expand role of the Campbell Creek Science Center with links to the Alaska Botanical Garden.
- Develop educational and interpretive materials to increase public awareness of the importance of local parks.

School-Park Cooperative Agreement

- Develop joint use agreement with ASD to expand and upgrade use of high school athletic facilities. Upgrade existing high school fields with engineered athletic turf to expand play and allow public use during non-school times.
- Encourage, where possible, new high schools to jointly develop public use areas with shared funding responsibilities.
- Increase cooperation for outdoor education opportunities between schools and parks.

Indoor Recreation Facilities

- Increase maintenance, expansion and facility upgrades for existing facilities including Ben Boeke Ice Arena, Kincaid, Russian Jack Greenhouse, and recreation centers at Spenard, Fairview, Mtn. View, and Northeast Community Center.
- Develop new recreation centers for Muldoon, Jewel Lake at the old Dimond High School, and south Anchorage at Abbott and Lake Otis.
- Examine long-term maintenance fund with dedication of a percentage of construction budget to be set aside to take care of existing and new facilities.
- Examine use patterns at the five municipal swimming pools and make recommendations to maximize public use.

Acquire Land and Develop New Parks

- Acquire new parkland from HLB or through purchase of private lands that are located in targeted underserved areas. This could include, Waldron Lake, Muldoon, South Anchorage, and Jewel Lake areas.
- Work with BLM to explore potential for transfer of Campbell Tract to fulfill FNBP Master Plan intent.
- Establish partnership with ACVB and other tourism related groups to market and attract international sports competitions and special events, that includes shared revenues.



Figure 20. Special Use Needs Assessment (# Facilities per 10,000 population)

| Special Use Area by Subarea | MOA Existing Inventory | 2003 Need LOS 4.5 MIN | 2003 Need LOS 7.0 REC | 2020 Need LOS 4.5 MIN | 2020 Need LOS 7.0 REC |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Central | 206 | 42 | -50 | -28 | -158 |
| Northeast | 363 | 49 | -125 | -12 | -221 |
| Northwest | 129 | -53 | -154 | -148 | -302 |
| Southeast | 366 | 281 | 234 | 205 | 116 |
| Southwest | 273 | 163 | 101 | 66 | -50 |
| Total | 1337 | 482 | 7 | 82 | -615 |

Develop and Improve Access, Trails, and Connections

- Continue to upgrade trails and path system to safely connect Special Use areas with parks, schools, homes, and shops.
- Site new parks adjacent or close to major trails.
- Connect Special Use areas to the larger trail network to improve transportation and connectivity.



4. Natural Resource Use Area

The Natural Resource Use areas of the Anchorage Bowl provide for significant natural functions. They are the natural landscapes and stream corridors that link neighborhoods, parks, and schools, and act as buffers between different land uses.

It is the intent of this Plan to formalize Natural Resource Use area as a park classification. Final location, designations, and acreages of the new Natural Resource Use areas will be determined through master planning actions within each new park district. Map 6, Natural Resource Use Areas, currently displays existing natural resource data which will serve as the basis for future Natural Resource Use area designations.



Natural Resource Use areas are lands that will ultimately be set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics or buffering. These lands provide critical habitat and migration routes for fish and wildlife that are important to the community.

These lands can consist of individual sites exhibiting natural resources; lands that are unsuitable for development but offer natural resource potential such as steep slopes, drainage ways and ravines, surface water management areas and utility easements; protected lands, such as wetlands/lowlands, shorelines along waterways, lakes and ponds. They help define the physical form of the city by contributing to its natural character and creating unique neighborhoods.

The objective with these lands is to enhance the livability and character of the community by preserving as many of its natural amenities as possible.

Natural Resource Use Space

Natural Resource Use areas are lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics or buffering. Natural Resource Use areas are divided into three categories, as follows:

- **Natural Resource Preservation Land:** Those areas that perform important environmental functions and have high ecological values. This includes streams, associated riparian zones and streambank setbacks, flood hazard areas, Class A and B wetlands, seismic hazard zones, steep slopes in excess of 15 percent, lands with conservation easements and other restrictions and any other lands determined to have unique or endangered habitat values. These lands should be permanently dedicated as Natural Resource Preservation Lands.
- **Natural Resource Conservation Land:** Those areas with significant natural vegetation, that perform storm water management, habitat, visual or noise buffer, or other natural function important to the community.
- **Natural Resource Reserve Land:** Those areas that retain most of their natural vegetation, perform a variety of natural functions found throughout the Anchorage Bowl, but that have features that make development for public use possible with limited cost and minimal disturbance to the surrounding ecosystem.

Recommendations for Level of Service

No LOS is recommended for Natural Resource Use areas. These areas are determined by the extent of their natural functions.

Map 6, Natural Resource Use Areas, is for reference purposes only and will require the development of natural resource plans and site investigations prior to final classification as preservation, conservation, or reserve.

Natural Resource Use areas link many outstanding city parks and their diverse facilities into a continuous recreation system. These areas provide the opportunity to preserve special places – quiet woods, wetlands, and wildlife habitats – for public enjoyment in their natural state. Natural resources contribute the most amenity when they are easily accessible to residential neighborhoods. Residents of adjacent housing developments can take advantage of increased recreation opportunity and transportation alternatives as well as realize increased property values.

A major objective of this Plan is to join neighborhoods to parkland through natural resource corridors. The Natural Resource Use element of the Plan is designed to complement the overall land use envisioned in **Anchorage 2020**.

Map 6 illustrates the existing supply of Natural Resource Use areas, along with the potential future service areas for each district. The Anchorage Bowl currently has 8,911 acres of Natural Resource Use areas. These areas are intended to serve a wider range than for individual subareas and are based on the availability of the resources.

The application of LOS to these use areas is not feasible or recommended due to the unique character of these types of lands. While Anchorage now has 42 acres per 1,000 population, this standard would be impossible to maintain while providing a balance between natural and developed parkland. The benchmark city average was 20 acres and the top 33 percent had 30 acres per 1,000 population.

Some of the lands identified in the Natural Resource Classification were originally acquired for future park development. Those Natural Resource areas that have the highest function should be preserved while other areas should be considered for future development to meet future needs. Key areas are along the creeks and drainageways and for important missing components in the system to help connect landscapes and provide public access along greenbelts.

Natural Resource Use areas are identified:

- To conserve natural features of land
- To provide recreation opportunities close-to-home, minimizing time and barriers to participation
- To accommodate trails and recreation facilities
- To protect streams and natural areas
- To provide public access to the coast
- To lend identity to communities and provide buffers between incompatible land uses
- To provide links between residential areas, parks, schools, and major areas of public activities
- To protect wetlands and other environmentally sensitive areas
- To provide sight and sound buffering to protect residential areas
- To maintain habitat and movement for wildlife



Suitable recreation land should be reserved before presently vacant land is fully developed.

Issues

Several growth-related issues form the context of the proposed additions to Anchorage’s natural resource land base system. The recommendations include both the continued acquisition of natural resource areas and greenbelts that will complete the system and the establishment of preservation, conservation, and reserved areas based on natural resource plans.

Anchorage is at a critical point in its urban evolution. The remaining land base in the Anchorage Bowl is rapidly disappearing. Suitable recreation land should be reserved before vacant land is fully developed.

Another major threat will be from forest fire due to the Spruce Bark Beetle kill areas along the hillside and Southeast subarea.

Natural Resource Use areas are vital to a set of water-related issues. The protection of stream courses and wetlands is necessary to preserve water quality and minimize runoff volumes. Passive recreation is often the primary appropriate use of stream corridors and wetlands that are unsuitable for other land uses.



Anchorage has a successful policy of establishing stream corridor open spaces. Natural Resource Use areas proposed by this Plan continue this policy. In addition, the Plan proposes reserving strategic wetlands as dedicated natural resource space, with residential development planned for surrounding land.

The third issue affecting natural resource areas concerns the opportunity for the restoration of former gravel extraction and industrial sites. Through careful design and landscape reconstruction, these sites will be able to accommodate future housing and industrial development while reserving natural open space resource use areas as an integral part of the development.

Strategies for improvement include:

Existing Natural Resource Preservation and Improvements

- Develop ecosystem-based natural resource management plans for all larger parks and Natural Resource Use areas to identify

Examples of Existing Natural Resource Reserve Lands in the Anchorage Bowl

| Name | Subarea | Classification | Reserve Acres |
|--------------------------------|---------|----------------|---------------|
| Taku School Park | CE | NR | 1.0 |
| Bancroft Park | CE | NU | 1.0 |
| University Park | NE | NR | 1.0 |
| Elmore Park | SE | NR | 1.0 |
| Huffman Park | SE | NR | 5.0 |
| Rabbit Creek Park | SE | NR | 5.0 |
| Old Rabbit Creek Park | SE | NR | 5.0 |
| Griffin Park | SE | NR | 5.0 |
| Sand Lake Park | SW | NR | 5.1 |
| Taku Lake Park | CE | CU | 10.0 |
| Lynwood Park | CE | NR | 10.0 |
| Spruce Park | CE | NR | 10.0 |
| Arnold L. Muldoon Park | NE | NR | 10.0 |
| Tikishla Park/Davenport Field | NE | NR | 10.0 |
| Johns Park | SW | NR | 10.0 |
| Russian Jack Springs Park | NE | SU | 20.0 |
| University Lake Park | NE | NR | 20.0 |
| Little Rabbit Creek Bluff Park | SE | NR | 20.0 |
| South Anchorage Park | CE | NR | 40.0 |
| Section 36 | SE | NR | 40.0 |
| Total | | | 229.1 |

Figure 21. Natural Resource Use Needs Assessment by Acres

| Natural Resource Use Area by Subarea | MOA Existing Inventory |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Central | 1,975 |
| Northeast | 1,986 |
| Northwest | 503 |
| Southeast | 2,466 |
| Southwest | 1,981 |
| Total | 8,911 |

Note: No LOS is recommended for Natural Resource Use areas. These areas are determined by the extent of their natural functions.

preservation, conservation, and reservation lands.

- Work cooperatively with community volunteers, watershed entities, and other resource agencies to protect and restore important resources.
- Identify critical resource lands including stream corridors, wetlands, and high-value habitat; and establish formal Natural Resource Preserve dedications through the municipal land use regulations.
- Educate and inform residents about the values of natural resources.
- Work with Anchorage Fire Department and forester to help implement resource-based management of the Natural Resource Use areas and coordinate with to develop a fire management plan.

Acquire Land and Preserve Critical Habitat

- Acquire critical Natural Resource Use areas from HLB inventory or through purchase of private lands that are located in targeted gap areas. This could include lands along Campbell, Fish, Little Campbell, Chester, Rabbit and Little Rabbit Creeks,

Connors Lake, and other areas.

- Work with land trusts and other organizations to develop private-public partnerships to acquire new land.
- Identify critical resource lands, including stream corridors, wetlands, and high-value habitat; and establish Natural Resource Preserve dedications through the municipal land use regulations.

Develop and Improve Access, Trails, and Connections

- Continue to upgrade trails and path system to safely connect Natural Resource Use areas with parks, schools, homes, and shops with minimal disturbances.
- Develop new trails along Natural Use corridors.
- Establish a scenic trail system using existing greenbelts to promote visitors to stay an extra day in Anchorage.
- Establish an integrated trail system that enhances access to other park systems and Natural Resource Use areas in the Anchorage Bowl such as Chugach State Park.
- Publish an access guide and inventory profile to natural areas.

5. Trails and Connectors

The Municipality should continue to upgrade trails to safely connect neighborhoods with local schools and improve transportation and connectivity.



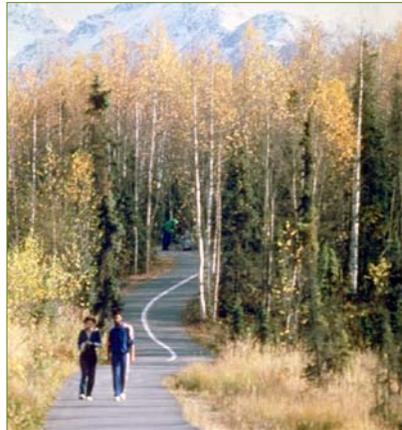
Recommendations for Level of Service

The minimum LOS shall be 10.5 miles of trail per 10,000 population.

The desired LOS shall be 12.6 miles of trail per 10,000 population. (See Figure 22.)

Trails and connectors provide non-motorized links between residential areas, parks and schools, close-to-home recreation, and a sense of community. They increase economic development potential and contribute to a healthy community, provide wildlife movement corridors, and linear habitat. This classification consists of trails, greenbelts, and linear parks, and includes a mix of hard- and soft-surface trails. Maintenance of these areas is dependent on the type of trail and design standard. Examples include:

- Paved multi-use trail
- Natural surface trail
- Trailhead
- Trailhead parking area



Trails serve a dual function in Anchorage. They are a recreational facility from which a variety of leisure time enjoyment is derived. In addition, they are also an integral part of the transportation system, providing mobility and accessibility to areas and facilities by various modes of travel.

Details and administration of the municipal trails program area are contained in the adopted **Areawide Trails Plan**. It is intended to be the basic policy document for development of trails in the Anchorage area. As such, it serves as the basis for establishing and maintaining access routes and use areas as they relate to community centers and recreational activities.

The Plan identifies trails that serve a variety of modes for traveling safely and enjoyably without automobiles or other large-motor vehicles. The trails are intended for bicyclists, pedestrians, equestrians, dog mushers, cross-country skiers, snowmobilers, joggers, disabled persons, and, to a lesser extent, motorcyclists. The **Areawide Trails Plan** identifies the general location for trails development and the types of uses associated with the development. Specific trail locations should be reviewed and updated for consistency with the final **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan**.

For the purpose of this Plan, trails will be discussed only in terms of their impact on providing a healthy community through recreational opportunities and linking parks, schools, and other public facilities with local neighborhoods. Map 7, Recreation Trails and Connections, illustrates the existing Anchorage Bowl trails.

Issues

Anchorage is a community of outdoor enthusiasts with a wide variety of summer- and winter-time trail interests. Some uses are compatible on the same trail facility (jogging and bicycling), while others are not (horseback riding and motorcycling). Some trails require special facilities for a specific group of users (disabled persons trails), while other trails must be located in very specific site areas (dirt bike trails). Because trails serve a variety of users, they vary in design, locational, and aesthetic characteristics. Major issues center on surrounding area and joint use of facilities.

Direction of Municipal Program

The **Areawide Trails Plan** attempted to separate non-compatible trail users. It also identified certain design requirements and administrative procedures necessary to implement the proposed non-motorized trail system and motorized use areas.

The role of trails in the **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** concerns development and support for scenic trail corridors that maximize access to existing parks, especially Community Use and Special Use areas. The **Areawide Trails Plan** identifies concept corridor locations for trail development but does not identify particular route locations. These more specific locations are required for the reservation of easements as part of subdivision plats. Implementation of the trail corridors is to occur through the platting process or via roadway improvements with the use of available – and future – utility and roadway rights-of-way.

Municipal policy, as expressed through the adoption of the **Areawide Trails Plan**, is to treat bikeways and the other various forms of non-motorized transport as important elements of the overall transportation system. These non-motorized circulation systems are to be incorporated where feasible, as part of highway improvements and major new road projects. It is intended that this general policy will be expressed in multi-modal transportation projects and pedestrian circulation studies for principal trip generation centers, including schools.

The continued application of this multi-use concept in transportation system development should eventually result in the establishment of an integrated trail-highway circulation system serving major trip origins and destinations. In addition, municipal policy shall continue to address development of motorized use areas that do not conflict with residential areas and established non-motorized use. In practice, implementation of this policy will require the increased cooperative use and management of nearby state and federal lands. Motorized uses are largely incompatible with most urban activities and require large open spaces only available in adjacent state and federal lands.

Strategies include:

Existing Trails Improvements

- Incorporate trail design and location methods that address and minimize bear conflicts, in coordination with ADFG.
- Continue to upgrade existing areawide trails through repairs and rehabilitation.
- Improve pedestrian safety for access to parks and schools.
- Improve trail safety through support of our Trail Watch volunteer patrol.
- Continue upgrades to trailheads and trail networks at Far North Bicentennial, Russian Jack, Campbell Tract, Chester Creek, Davis, Tikishla, and Kincaid Parks.
- Examine appropriate lighting of trails including Campbell, Chester Creek, Tikishla, Chester, and Fish Creek Trails.

Acquire Land and Complete Critical Links in Trail System

- Acquire critical trail corridors to complete overall network of trails as appropriate.
- Acquire and enhance access points to Chugach State Park and Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge as appropriate.
- Acquire appropriate access points to neighborhood and community parks.
- Complete the Kincaid to Potter Marsh pedestrian corridors.
- Complete Ship Creek Trail connecting Coastal Trail to Mountain View, Downtown

and Government Hill.

- Complete Campbell Creek Trail connection between Lake Otis and Old Seward.
- Complete trail connection from De La Vega Park to Campbell Creek Trail.
- Acquire and enhance public access to Chugach State Park and Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge at sites that minimize impacts to private lands and wildlife.

Develop and Improve Access, Trails and Connections

- Continue to upgrade trails and path system to safely connect parks, schools, homes, and commercial areas.
- Develop new trails along Natural Resource Use corridors.
- Establish a scenic trail system using existing greenbelts to promote visitors to stay an extra day in Anchorage and play on trails and in parks.
- Require access points to Chugach State Park and other natural areas at one-mile intervals.
- Utilize Title 21 for dedication of trail rights-of-way through subdivisions.

Figure 22. Trails - Access Needs Assessment in Miles of Trails per 10,000 population

| Recreation Trails | LOS Range Miles | MOA Existing Inventory | 2003 Need MIN LOS | 2003 Need REC LOS | 2020 Need MIN LOS | 2020 Need REC LOS |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Multi-purpose Trails | 10.5 12.6 | 220 | +20.5 | -19 | -73 | -131 |

Alternative Park Plan and Management Scenarios

To begin to address the park planning choices that the community must make, four alternative park plan scenarios have been developed to project the overall growth of parks, open space, and recreation facilities for the Bowl over the next 20 years. (See Figure 23 and Appendix B.) Each of these scenarios will build on the recreational needs and use the LOS assessment model that was developed to explore a range of options. It will be the responsibility of the community to select and fund a preferred alternative to meet future recreational needs of the Anchorage Bowl.

Alternative 1: Maintain Current Level of Service.

The primary goal of this alternative is to maintain the current (2004) levels of service for park and recreation facilities in the Bowl using the minimum LOS and based on population growth over the next 20 years. Even at the minimum LOS, the challenge will be to adequately fund the needed new development to keep up with population growth. The current system has a number of deficiencies that exist today and these deficiencies will continue to grow over the next 20 years.

Many of the existing parks and facilities need repair, and continued budget shortfalls are further eroding services. It will be difficult to keep pace with what we have, including better maintenance, a focus on core services, and maintaining existing levels of school use.

This alternative is based on the current level of tax funding with an increase in user fees to 20 percent of budget and a strong private-public partnership and park foundation.

Alternative 2: Expand the System to Meet High Recreation Demand.

The primary goal is to improve on the 2004 LOS to meet the high level of demand placed on the system by the community. The alternative

will utilize the high LOS to develop new parks and facilities over the next 20 years that match the top 33 percent target rate of the benchmark cities.

Existing deficiencies will be addressed and an emphasis will be placed on building partnerships between the private sector and School District. A new system of park districts will be developed for the five subareas with key facilities and programs centered in each district. New winter recreation areas and tournament-quality sports venues will be developed within the Special Use areas to meet both local needs and to increase economic opportunities from the tourism industry. A variety of funding sources will be developed, along with a park foundation and friends of parks group to help maintain support.

This alternative will require additional funding sources and establishment of a strong private-public partnership and park foundation.

Alternative 3: Balanced System.

The primary goal of this alternative is to provide a balance between minimum and desired LOS while juxtaposing budgetary constraints with the recreational needs of the community. A range between the low and high LOS will be used in combination with a strong school-park partnership to build a systemwide program.

This alternative requires additional funding sources and establishment of a strong private-public partnership and park foundation.

Alternative 4: Reduction in Services.

This alternative will focus on the realities of the 2004 budget limitations and the lack of long-term funding or support for the system. The primary goal will be to maintain 2004 LOS where possible but it will identify areas of major reductions including such popular items as the Community Schools program, swimming pools and the annual flower program. Process

will need to include use of the Core Service Model to identify key projects and programs to retain.



Preferred Alternative

The development of a preferred alternative will require political will and community vision and support. The final choice will probably be a mix of all four of the above alternatives and will take place incrementally over the next 20 years. **Anchorage 2020** outlines an ambitious set of goals for the community in regards to the quality of life and economic opportunities that we expect. Parks, open space and recreational facilities play a significant role in this process.

It is within the financial ability of Anchorage to support the minimum level LOS as outlined in Alternative One with annual park capital expenditures averaging \$7 million per year over the next 20 years. By leveraging bond funds

with a strong private foundation and friends of parks group, it is realistic to imagine Anchorage supporting the level of CIP required to achieve Alternative 3's annual commitment of 10 million in existing park upgrades and new park development.

This alternative maintains the current level of tax funding and increases user fees by 15 percent of budget.

Notes: The CIP is based on a 20-year average cost inflated at 2 percent annually. Trails are funded in most cases through federal matching funds with as much as 90 percent federal share. Dollars are listed in Thousands.

Figure 23. Park Plan Alternative CIP Estimate

| Item | Alternative 1 | Alternative 2 | Alternative 3 | Alternative 4 |
|----------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| General Description | Maintain current LOS using the minimum standard | Expand system to meet high LOS using Alternative 1 plus additional projects below | Balance system between high and low LOS with focus on school partnerships | Reduce services based on budget limitations and focus on core services |
| Neighborhood Use Areas | \$ 60,780 | \$120,450 | \$ 66,900 | \$30,000 |
| Community Use Areas | \$ 25,020 | \$ 68,180 | \$ 48,180 | \$18,000 |
| Special Use Areas | \$ 31,070 | \$ 49,460 | \$ 41,100 | \$19,500 |
| Natural Resource Use Areas | \$ 2,470 | \$ 48,000 | \$ 4,800 | \$ 2,470 |
| Recreational Trails | \$144,000 | \$219,000 | \$171,000 | \$52,000 |
| Athletic Facilities | Part of Community Use | Part of Community Use | Part of Community Use | Part of Community Use |
| Summer-oriented Facilities | \$ 370 | \$ 1,105 | \$ 1,105 | \$ 370 |
| Winter-oriented Facilities | \$ 6,000 | \$ 12,000 | \$ 9,000 | \$ 3,000 |
| Indoor-oriented Facilities | \$ 18,180 | \$ 41,680 | \$ 32,200 | \$10,000 |
| Total CIP | Parks \$143,890 Trails \$144,000 Total \$287,890 | Parks \$340,875 Trails \$219,000 Total \$559,875 | Parks \$203,285 Trails \$171,000 Total \$374,285 | Parks \$ 83,340 Trails \$ 52,000 Total \$135,340 |
| Annual CIP | Parks \$ 7,195 Trails \$ 7,200 Total \$ 14,395 | Parks \$17,044 Trails \$10,950 Total \$27,994 | Parks \$10,164 Trails \$ 8,550 Total \$18,714 | Parks \$4,167 Trails \$2,600 Total \$6,767 |



Park & Recreation Districts



Anchorage's streams, topography, major highways, and community council boundaries generally divide the city into five distinct park district subareas, each one having different characteristics and development patterns. Types of development and density of population differ greatly among the subareas as do their natural resources, parkland, recreation facilities, and uses. Some have access to wonderful natural resources. Others have a wide variety of recreation opportunities. No subarea has a complete range of recreation facilities and opportunities or resources nor will all areas be equal.

While physical variations account for much of the differences in the park districts, the chronology of neighborhood development also plays a part. The downtown areas in northwest and northeast Anchorage were part of the original city and have a more extensive development of parks and recreation facilities, but limited access to Natural Resource Use areas. South Anchorage and the

hillside were part of the original Greater Anchorage Area Borough and have less developed parks and recreation facilities but better access to Natural Resource Use areas. These inequities will never be able to be fully balanced.

The following section describes these five park districts, their physical differences, existing park and recreation facilities, and issues and needs. This Plan recommends that each of these park districts be developed to foster better community involvement. Recommendations are to address the park and recreation opportunities within the natural limits of each area.

As the community grows in diversity and density, managing parks via this district approach will encourage a more balanced and equitable park distribution, budgeting, and community support.

Figure 24. Anchorage Bowl Park Districts¹

Population

The population of the Anchorage Bowl is expected to grow from 190,000 in 2000 to over 279,000 by 2020. This growth will not be dispersed equally throughout the Anchorage Bowl's five park districts. This is due in part to availability of vacant land for new residential development and the corresponding land use regulations that will guide the location of new housing. The figure and chart below further break down population projections for each of the five park districts.²

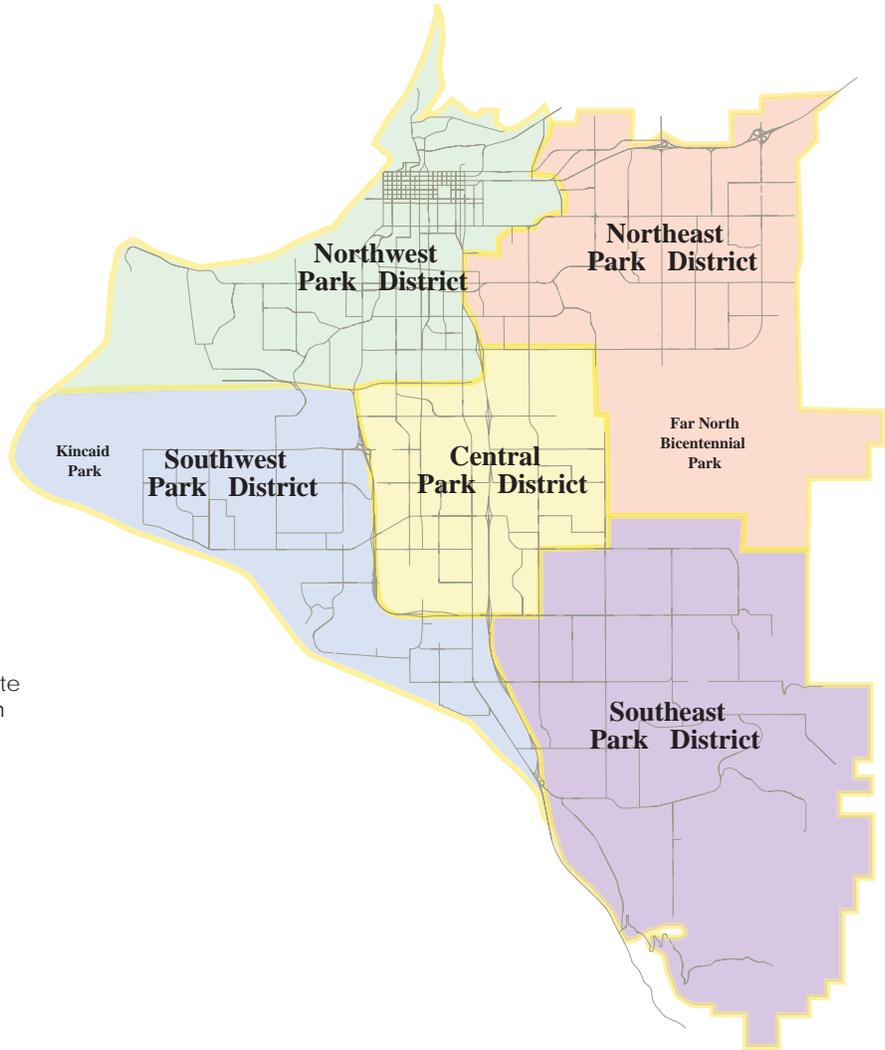
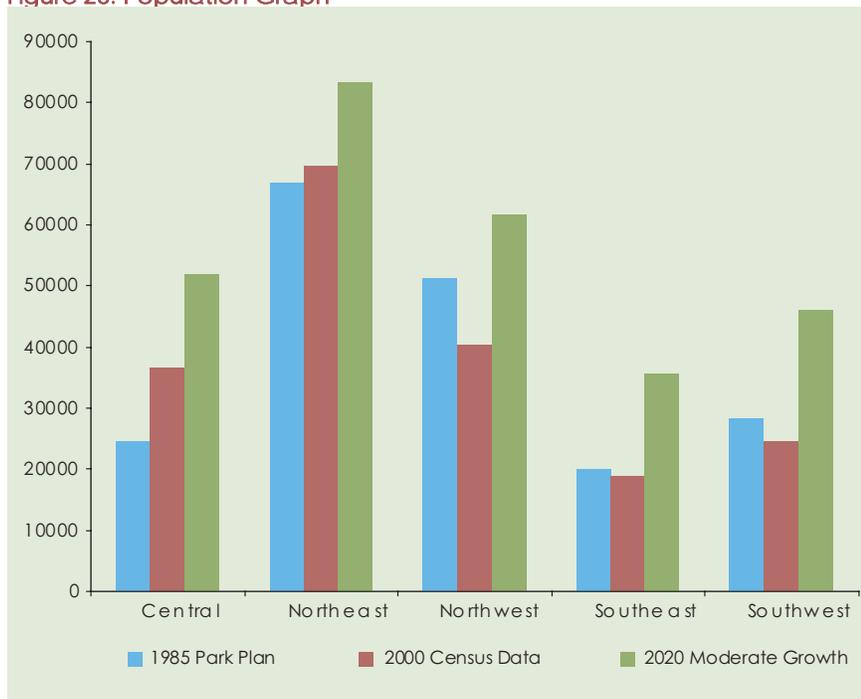


Figure 25. Population Growth

| Population Analysis | 1980 Census 85 Park Plan ³ | 2000 Census Data | 2020 Moderate Growth |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Central | 24,503 | 36,500 | 52,048 |
| Northeast | 66,787 | 69,779 | 83,443 |
| Northwest | 51,164 | 40,413 | 61,592 |
| Southeast | 20,040 | 18,786 | 35,733 |
| Southwest | 28,344 | 24,511 | 46,103 |
| Total | 190,838 | 189,989 | 278,919 |

Figure 26. Population Graph



Footnotes

¹ The park district boundaries represent the Anchorage 2020 and should be examined based on the revisions to the existing community council boundaries. It will be important to establish boundaries that allow the Planning Department to provide accurate population growth numbers.

² The population growth is based on the Anchorage 2020 projections. Actual annual growth should be used to determine future need by subarea. It should be noted that while the 1985 plan projected a population growth, in fact the population actually saw a reduction in population.

³ The 1985 Plan identified 4 subareas. The Anchorage 2020 added a fifth area (Central), requiring adjustment of population data to match current boundaries with the 1983 TD zones used for the Parks Plan.

Central

Park and Recreation District

Description

This park district includes a diversity of land uses with access to north-south transportation corridors. The area is landlocked from the coast and mountains by geographic boundaries and major roads, to the north Tudor Road, planned Abbott Loop Road extension and Far North Bicentennial Park, to the south by O'Malley Road and to the west by Minnesota Drive. The area is further bisected by the Seward Highway, effectively cutting off neighborhoods, greenbelts, and trail access to local schools and parks. It has a mix of single- and multi-family subdivisions, plus scattered small residential pockets without park and recreation facilities and industrial land. The present population is 36,500 and is projected to grow to 52,048 by 2020. The 2020 population growth allocation assumes infill development of existing residential lands, extensive multi-family housing development along transit corridors, and continued industrial and commercial expansion.

Resources and Facilities

This park district has the fewest parks and recreational facilities of any of the subareas with a total of 20 acres of developed Neighborhood Use areas in mini- and neighborhood parks, 17 acres of Community Use areas, 206 acres of Special Use areas, and 1,975 acres of Natural Resource Use areas. (See Figure 27.) Of the developed parks, Campbell Park is the largest with a total of 286 acres. Most of this is undeveloped Natural Resource Use area, part of the Campbell Creek Greenbelt and Trail system. The most significant park feature for the area is the Campbell Creek Greenbelt and Trail which runs east to west through the subarea connecting Far North Bicentennial Park and Chugach State Park to the east with Kincaid Park and the Coastal Trail to the west. The area has 8 (6 on private land) athletic fields, 6 playgrounds, and 2 picnic shelters. In addition, the area has over 200 acres of Natural Resource Use areas at 9

sites as well as access to Far North Bicentennial Park (FNBP) along the eastern boundary.

Central District Issues and Needs

Park Shortages

- This area has deficiencies in all aspects of the park system, including a shortage of 58 to 110 acres of Neighborhood Use and 61 to 113 acres of Community Use areas.
- The area will require five to ten new Neighborhood Use parks between five and ten acres in size over the next 20 years.
- The area will require two to three new Community Use parks in the next 20 years.
- Parks are deficient in the following areas:
 - Old Seward between Dimond and O'Malley
 - Abbott and Lake Otis in Independence Park Subdivision
 - West 84th between Abbott and 68th Avenue
 - North Abbott Loop
 - Dowling Road and Lake Otis
 - Dowling Road and Old Seward
- Several of the parks that are classified as NU or CU have limited facilities or have not been developed.

Natural Resource Needs

- The primary Natural Resource Use area is the Campbell Creek Greenbelt. This heavily used corridor is nearly surrounded by development and roads. The water quality of Campbell Creek should be monitored.
- The Little Campbell Creek watershed has been heavily developed through the area and should be monitored for water quality.

The most significant park feature for the area is the Campbell Creek Greenbelt and Trail.



Figure 27. Central Subarea Park Needs by Acres per 1,000 population

| Central Parks by Classification | MOA Existing Inventory | 2003 Need LOS 1.5 MIN | 2003 Need LOS 2.5 REC | 2020 Need LOS 1.5 MIN | 2020 Need LOS 2.5 REC |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Neighborhood Use Areas | 20 | -35 | -71 | -58 | -110 |
| Community Use Areas | 17 | -38 | -74 | -61 | -113 |
| Special Use Areas | 206 | 42 | -50 | -28 | -158 |
| Total | 243 | -31 | -195 | -147 | -381 |

Facility Deficiencies

- This area has deficiencies in varying aspects of park types and recreational facilities, including the following:
 - The area has no indoor community center.
 - There are limited athletic facilities within the district, but a number of facilities are available along the boundaries including Ruth Arcand, South Anchorage Sports Park and the areas at Abbott Loop now under construction.
 - The area will require 7 ball fields, 2 soccer fields, 5 softball fields, 5 basketball courts, 10 playground, 14 open playfields, 3 shelters, 4 outdoor ice skating areas, and 3 sledding hills by 2020.

Access, Trails, and Connectivity Needs

- The primary trail is the Campbell Creek Trail along the greenbelt. At present, this greenbelt system has several key missing links at Lake Otis Boulevard and at the Seward Highway and at Campbell Lake.
- North and south access is along both Lake Otis and C Street. Completion of C Street south to O’Malley Road will open access to the South Anchorage Sports Park.

Central District Recommendations

Upgrade Existing Parks

- Continue to upgrade existing parks and develop new facilities in dedicated parks, including:
 - Campbell Park: improve play area, expand picnic area, playfield, and parking.
 - Bancroft Park: improve play area, ballfield, picnic area, and connection to elementary school.
 - Taku Lake Park: improve play areas, picnic grounds and waterfront areas.
 - Spruce Park: develop facilities for playground, play area, picnic that build on adjacent Winchester Park.
 - Lore Park: continue to develop facilities for local play.
 - Lynwood Park: develop new park or acquire land in the adjacent area to serve local neighborhood along Dowling Road.
 - Abbott Loop Community Park: continue development of the park with picnic area, playground, and open playfield.



The Central District has the fewest parks and recreational facilities of any of the subareas.

- South Anchorage Community Park: this area is located in primarily industrial zone adjacent to O'Malley and the C Street extension. The area is adjacent to other industrial lands and is not well located to serve the subarea. Consider trading site for area more centrally located in a residential area or connected to an existing park.

Expand and Develop Recreation Facilities

- Upgrade baseball fields at Abbott-O-Rabbit.

Protect and Improve Natural Resources

- Continue to acquire, enhance, and develop greenbelts along Campbell Creek and Little Campbell Creek.
- Improve trails, landscape, and picnic areas at Meadow Park.
- Ensure Campbell Creek Greenbelt is maintained through FNPB and Campbell Park to maintain connections of wildlife corridors and habitat.

Acquire Land and Develop New Parks

- Acquire and develop new parks in the following area:



- Acquire new park at Old Seward between Dimond and O'Malley for increased residential growth area. Consider land trade for South Anchorage Sports Park for a more developable, strategically located park site.
- Acquire new park at Lake Otis and Dowling for future community park.
- Acquire new park at Lake Otis and Abbott for future community park.
- Look at potential for acquiring portion of Waldron Lake to maintain soccer fields and adding a neighborhood park.
- Look at potential for acquiring Campbell Tract from BLM and completion of FNPB Master Plan.

- Develop environmental education resources in cooperation with the BLM Campbell Creek Science Center.

Develop Park Access, Trails, and Connectivity

- Complete the Campbell Creek Trail between Lake Otis and Old Seward.
- Complete the Midtown Trail along C Street with connection south to South Anchorage Sports Park.
- Develop trail access along Bragaw Road extension to link to Campbell Creek Trail.
- Look at east-west corridor potential in the vicinity of the north fork of Little Campbell Creek.

School-Park Partnership

- Encourage development of school-park joint facilities at the following elementary school sites:
 - Taku
 - Kasuun
 - Northern Lights ABC at Lake Otis and Dowling

- Complete Dowling Road pedestrian improvements with bike lane.

Northeast

Park and Recreation District

Description

The Northeast Park District is characterized by established neighborhoods with pockets of higher density and newer development. This is the most populous subarea with 69,779 people. The population growth allocation of **Anchorage 2020** assumes continued growth with a projected population of 83,443 by 2020.

Additional redevelopment of the area is anticipated with higher residential densities, creation of a town center in Muldoon, and expansion of the University-Medical District. This expansion will increase demand for additional park and recreational facilities and programs.

Resources and Facilities

This park district is one of the older regions in the Anchorage Bowl and has the largest concentration of parks, recreation facilities and natural resource with a total of 2,578 acres. The area has 30 athletic fields, 25 playgrounds, and 13 picnic shelters. Key parks, natural resources, and recreational facilities within this region include Russian Jack Springs Park, Cheney Lake Park, Goose Lake Park, University Lake Park, and the Mountain View Recreation Center.



The primary natural resource in the area is the Chester Creek Greenbelt, Ship Creek Greenbelt, Baxter Bog Park, portions of Russian Jack Springs Park and Far North Bicentennial Park. In addition, the foothills of the Chugach Mountains border the eastern boundary of the park district.

Northeast Park District Issues and Needs

Park Shortages

- This area has deficiencies in various aspects of the park system and will have a shortage of 48 to 132 acres of Neighborhood Use (NU) and

up to 57 acres of Community Use (CU) areas by 2020. (See Figure 28.) The area requires 8 to 10 new neighborhood use parks between 5 and 10 acres in size over the next 20 years. The area will require 1 to 2 new Community Use parks in the next 20 years.

- NU parks are deficient in the following areas:
 - University Park
 - Scenic Foothills
 - Russian Jack Park
 - Northeast
 - Tudor
- CU parks are deficient in the following areas:
 - Muldoon and DeBarr
 - University
- Several of the parks that are classified as NU or CU have limited facilities or have not been developed.

Natural Resource Needs

- The primary Natural Resource Use area is the Chester Creek Greenbelt. This drainage way is heavily used with development along most areas of the creek. Water quality should be monitored and drainages into the area should be acquired and protected where possible.
- Improved community access to Far North Bicentennial Park should be pursued.
- Access to the Chugach Foothills should be improved and a natural resource buffer established between residential areas and military practice grounds including Arctic Valley for private non-profit recreational use such as Anchorage Ski Club management of the ski areas.
- Access along the Ship Creek Greenbelt should be secured with cooperative agreements with the Alaska Railroad and the Military. Stream restoration studies should be completed to maintain water quality and

Figure 28. Northeast Subarea Park Needs by Acres per 1,000 population

| Northeast Parks by Classification | MOA Existing Inventory | 2003 Need LOS 1.5 MIN | 2003 Need LOS 2.5 REC | 2020 Need LOS 1.5 MIN | 2020 Need LOS 2.5 REC |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Neighborhood Use Areas | 77 | -28 | -97 | -48 | -132 |
| Community Use Areas | 152 | 47 | -22 | 27 | -57 |
| Special Use Areas | 363 | 49 | -125 | -12 | -221 |
| Total | 592 | +68 | -244 | -33 | -410 |

habitat diversity and to restore aspects of the stream to a more natural state.

Bicentennial Park should be improved, including upgrades to Campbell Airstrip Road.

Facility Deficiencies

- This area has an adequate supply of facilities to meet current needs but will have a deficiency of 12 to 221 acres of Special Use areas by 2020 depending on the LOS standard used. At the low end of the LOS, the area has a shortage of 7 soccer fields, 4 basketball courts, 16 open playfields, and 3 outdoor skating areas by 2020.
- Indoor facilities are sufficient to maintain low levels of LOS, with the exception of the need for a new community center.
- Existing facilities need upgrades, including:
 - Russian Jack Springs Greenhouse.
 - Bartlett High School swimming pool.

- North-south corridors should be improved linking Community Use areas.
- Improve access to existing parks from surrounding neighborhoods.
- Access through the University-Medical District should be improved.
- Access to Mountain View should be improved along Ship Creek and to the south to Northway Mall.
- There are insufficient legal access points to meet public recreation needs along the west boundary of Chugach State Park.



Access, Trails, and Connectivity Needs

- The primary trail is the Chester Creek Trail along the greenbelt. This trail should be extended to connect to the Chugach Foothills area.
- Access to Far North

Northeast Park District Recommendations

Upgrade Existing Parks

- Continue to upgrade existing parks and develop new Neighborhood Use facilities in dedicated parks, including
 - University Park: improve off leash area, develop play area, picnic area, playfield, and parking.
 - Scenic Foothills: develop play area, picnic area,

playfield, and parking in corner of FNBP as master plan.

- Folker Park: develop play area, picnic area, playfield, and parking.
- Nash Park: develop play area, picnic area, playfield, and parking.
- Carlson Park: develop play area, picnic area, playfield, and parking.
- Baxter Bog Park: develop play area, picnic area, playfield, and parking in southeast corner.
- Nunaka Valley Park: continue to upgrade facilities.
- Eastchester-Sitka Park: continue to upgrade and expand facilities.



- CU parks are needed in the following areas:
 - Muldoon Road and DeBarr Road as part of a new town center.
 - University Lake Park: upgrade existing facilities.
 - Russian Jack Springs Park: provide upgrades to existing park area, including expanded athletic fields and new playgrounds; upgrade the golf course and trail system, and study the potential for expanding camping area.
 - Centennial Park: expand Community Use area, including playground, picnic area, open playfield, and upgrade to camp facilities.
 - Goose Lake Park: provide upgrades to picnic area, playground, and playfield.

- Cheney Lake Park: improve trails and picnic area per master plan.

Acquire Land and Develop New Parks

- Acquire and develop new park at the following:
 - Russian Jack Springs Park: acquire new park in Reka Drive or Williwaw area.
 - Tikishla Park: acquire additional access for local neighborhoods.
 - Creekside Town Center: acquire new parkland in east area and as part of town center development for Community Use.
 - East Muldoon: acquire new Neighborhood Use park area.

School-Park Partnership

- Develop school-park joint facilities at the following elementary school sites:
 - Creekside
 - Totem future site
 - Muldoon
 - Scenic Park
 - Baxter
 - Susitna
 - Russian Jack
 - Rogers Park

Expand and Develop Recreation Facilities

- Develop a new community center in partnership with the Muldoon/Creekside Town Center development within the vicinity of Muldoon Road and DeBarr Road.
- Continue partnership with Boys and Girls Club in Mountain View Community Center and Northeast Community Center.
- Continue to upgrade athletic facilities at Russian Jack Springs Park, including expanding soccer fields.

- Complete construction of Chuck Albrecht Softball Complex.
- Prepare study to evaluate economic potential for upgrading camping facilities at Centennial and Russian Jack Springs Park.
- Upgrade Russian Jack Springs Greenhouse.
- Upgrades Bartlett and East High Schools swimming pools.
- Improve Russian Jack Springs Park, including development of grass greens, improved layout for safety, practice area and other facilities to create quality learning center for junior, senior, and beginning golfers and expand winter and summer use with a safe sledding area, nordic ski start/finish, and improved picnic/playground facilities..

Protect and Improve Natural Resources

- The primary natural resource in the area is the Chester Creek Greenbelt. This drainage way is heavily used with development along most areas of the creek. The water quality should be monitored and drainages into the area acquired and protected.
- Improved community access to Far North Bicentennial Park should be improved, including lighted winter trail use connecting to developed facilities in the Southeast park district.
- Access to the Chugach Foothills should be acquired where possible through cooperative agreement with the Military to provide adequate natural use buffer zone between residential areas and military practice grounds.
- Access along the Ship Creek Greenbelt should be secured with cooperative agreements with the Alaska Railroad and

the Military. Stream restoration studies should be completed to maintain water quality and habitat diversity and to restore aspects of the stream to a more natural state.

- Provide trail and interpretive improvements to Baxter Bog Park.

Develop Park Access, Trails and Connectivity

- Complete the Chester Creek Trail with connections to Russian Jack and eastern neighborhoods.
- Link Chester Creek Trail through University Park to FNBP and the Tudor Road crossing.
- Develop winter-lighted trail connections from FNBP trailheads to link to lighted network in the Southeast subarea.
- Upgrade Campbell Airstrip Road.
- Complete the Ship Creek Trail with connections to Mountain View.
- Provide Muldoon Road landscape and pedestrian improvements.
- Improve access to Davis Park.
- Improve access to Tikishla Park.
- Improve Mountain View Greenbelt Trail.
- Provide access to Chugach State Park at key locations.



Northwest

Park and Recreation District

Description

As the oldest settled part of Anchorage, this area has the greatest potential for renewal and redevelopment and the second largest population base at 40,413. It has the second largest concentration of parks and recreation facilities. The area has the most multi-family housing in the Bowl, with high occupancy rates by seniors, non-family households, and single people. There are also some thriving older single-family neighborhoods.

Anchorage 2020 assumes a growth revival in the Downtown and Midtown mixed-use redevelopment areas. Increased densities and aging population will change the recreational demand for this area over time with anticipated population growing to 61,592 by 2020.

Resources and Facilities

This area has good concentration of park and recreation facilities in the Anchorage Bowl, but it has the lowest park acreage of any park district with only 817 total acres.

Key parks, Natural Resource Use areas and recreational facilities within this region include Delaney Park Strip, Town Square Park, Westchester Lagoon, Valley of the Moon Park, Spenard and Fairview Recreation Center, the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, and the Chester Creek and Ship Creek Greenbelts.

This area encompasses the unique and productive interface between Knik Arm and the Anchorage Bowl coastline. The area has 28 athletic fields, 30 playgrounds, and 10 picnic shelters. In addition to the close-to-home parks listed below, the area also has access to over 500 acres of regional Natural Resource Use areas at 24 different locations.

Park Shortages

- This area has an adequate supply in most aspects of the park system and will have a limited shortage of 7 to 69 acres of Neighborhood Use and up to 54 acres of Community Use areas by 2020. (See Figure 29.) The major issue with parks in this subarea is that most are mini-parks or neighborhood parks with acreage below the minimum recommended. Due to the historic settlement patterns of the area, additional land will be difficult to acquire. The area will not require any new Neighborhood Use parks over the next 20 years, but should expand existing parks or develop existing parks without facilities to meet growing needs. The area will require one new Community Use parks in the next 20 years.
- NU parks are deficient in the following areas:
 - Government Hill
 - Turnagain
 - Fairview
 - Northstar
 - Spenard
- CU parks are deficient in the following areas:
 - Delaney Park Strip: upgrade to Master Plan
 - Midtown Park: continue development
 - Town Square Park: continue upgrades

Natural Resource Needs

- The primary Natural Resource Use area is the Chester Creek Greenbelt, the Ship Creek Greenbelt, and the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. These corridors are heavily used with extensive adjacent development. The water quality should be monitored and drainages into the area acquired and protected.

The Tony Knowles Coastal Trail is one of the most used trails in the Anchorage Bowl.



Figure 29. Northwest Subarea Park Needs by Acres per 1,000 population

| Northwest Parks by Classification | MOA Existing Inventory | 2003 Need LOS 1.5 MIN | 2003 Need LOS 2.5 REC | 2020 Need LOS 1.5 MIN | 2020 Need LOS 2.5 REC |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Neighborhood Use Areas | 85 | 24 | -16 | -7 | -69 |
| Community Use Areas | 100 | 39 | -1 | 8 | -54 |
| Special Use Areas | 129 | -53 | -154 | -148 | -302 |
| Total | 314 | +10 | -171 | -147 | -425 |

- The area will have a shortage of Natural Use areas due to the higher density of residential development and the limited supply of land. Major areas under threat include lands along the coastal zone at the airport and at Westchester Lagoon due to increased development.

Facility Deficiencies

- This area has an adequate supply of facilities for indoor and outdoor recreation both today and through 2020 at the minimum levels of LOS, with the exception of open playfields which are in short supply. Additional winter recreation facilities include three outdoor skating areas and one additional sledding hill.
- Existing facilities in need of upgrades include:
 - Anchorage Football Stadium seating, restrooms, and running track
 - Mulcahy Stadium
 - Kosinski Baseball Fields
 - Ben Boeke Ice Rink
 - Fairview and Spenard Recreation Centers
 - West High School swimming pool.

Access, Trails, and Connectivity Needs

- The primary trails in the area are the Chester Creek Greenbelt and the Tony Knowles Coastal Trails, which need upgrades to existing pavement, widening due to heavy use, and erosion control along certain portions of the coast.
- Trail connections along Ship Creek should be developed to link to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, Downtown, Government Hill, and Mountain View.
- Earthquake Park requires improved parking and public access.
- Improvements to the Chester Creek Trail include access to adjacent neighborhoods.



Northwest Park District Recommendations

Upgrade Existing Parks

- Continue to upgrade existing parks and develop new Neighborhood Use facilities in dedicated parks including:
 - Government Hill Park: develop play area, picnic area, playfield, and parking.

As the oldest settled part of Anchorage, the Northwest District has the greatest potential for renewal and redevelopment.

- Browns Point Park: develop play area, picnic area, playfield, and parking.
- Richardson Vista Park: develop play area, picnic area, playfield, and parking.
- Sisterhood Park: develop play area, picnic area, playfield, and parking.
- Charles Smith Park: develop play area, picnic area, playfield, and parking.
- Elderberry Park: upgrade existing facilities.



- Continue to upgrade and expand Community Use parks, including:
 - Town Square Park: continue upgrades.
 - Delaney Park Strip: complete master plan and upgrade park.
 - Midtown Park: continue to acquire and develop park.
 - Sullivan Westchester Lagoon: upgrade parking and facilities and identify need to dredge lake.
 - Lyn Ary Park: restore open playfields and upgrade park facilities.

Acquire Land and Develop New Parks

- Acquire and develop additional parkland at Midtown Park.
- Acquire additional parkland where possible adjacent to existing undersized parks and in new redevelopment areas with high-density housing.

School-Park Partnership

- Develop school-park joint facilities at the following elementary school sites:

- Fairview
- Inlet View
- North Star

Expand and Develop Recreation Facilities

- Anchorage Football Stadium: seating, restrooms, and running track improvements.
- Mulcahy Stadium: economic benefits identification and facility improvements based on return on capital investments.
- Kosinski Baseball Field improvements.
- Ben Boeke Ice Rink improvements.
- Fairview and Spenard Recreation Centers facility upgrades.
- West High School swimming pool upgrades.

Protect and Improve Natural Resources

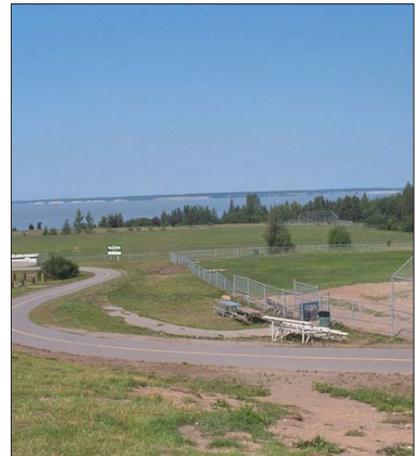
- Continue to acquire, enhance, and develop greenbelts along Ship, Chester, and Fish Creeks.
- Upgrades to Sullivan Westchester Lagoon, including dredging lake and improving fish passage.
- Work with the state to protect certain wetlands in and around Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport within federal guidelines and regulations, particularly along the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail.

Develop Park Access, Trails, and Connectivity

- Complete the Ship Creek Trail between Downtown and Mountain View.
- Connect the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail to Ship Creek Point and the Ship Creek Trail.
- Continue Coastal Trail repairs, including paving and coastal erosion, and acquire

permanent trail easement
corridor along Ted Stevens
Anchorage International
Airport.

- Connect Government Hill to the Ship Creek Trail.
- Connect Tony Knowles Coastal Trail to Fish Creek.
- Make improvements to Chester Creek Trail, including I Street step improvements and lighting.
- Complete 5th and 6th Avenue improvements east from C Street to Ingra.



Southeast

Park and Recreation District

Description

The Southeast Park District is composed mostly of single-family housing in large-lot subdivisions (1/2 to 1+ acre lots) with on-site well and septic services. Some medium-density multi-family housing is assumed to take place along the western portion of the lower hillside. All residential development in the rural portion of the service area boundary is low density.

The present population is 18,786, with growth expected to bring the population to 35,733 by 2020. Specific changes in the location of the sewer service area boundary and allowances for higher residential densities will be established in the proposed Hillside District Plan to allow expanded population growth. This will have an impact on the level of parks and recreational services that will need to be developed to accommodate future population growth.



Resources and Facilities

This area has the largest concentration of Natural Resource Use areas in the Anchorage Bowl, but it has the lowest amount of developed parks of any park district. Key parks, natural open space, and recreational facilities within this region include Ruth Arcand Park, Far North Bicentennial Park/Hillside Park, Hilltop Ski Area, Anchorage Golf Course, and Rabbit Creek Greenbelt. The area has nine athletic fields, three playgrounds, and two picnic shelters.

Besides the close-to-home parks listed below, the area also has access to Far North Bicentennial Park's 4,000 acres, as well as an additional 735 acres of regional parks and open space at 18 sites.

Southeast Park District Issues and Needs

Park Shortages

- This area has a shortage in all aspects of developed park and will have a shortage of 36 to 71 acres of Neighborhood Use and up to 34 to 69 acres of Community Use areas by 2020. (See Figure 30.)
- The area will require three to five new Neighborhood Use parks between five and ten acres in size over the next 20 years if elementary schools are not considered.
- The area will require one to two new Community Use parks in the next 20 years.
- NU parks are deficient in the following areas:
 - Huffman/O'Malley
 - Rabbit Creek
 - Mid-Hillside
 - Potter Valley
- CU parks are deficient in the following areas:
 - O'Malley/Elmore
 - Lake Otis between O'Malley and DeArmoun
- Several of the parks that are classified as NU or CU have limited facilities or have not been developed.

Natural Resource Needs

- While not part of the Anchorage Bowl Park System, the primary Natural Resource in the area is Chugach State Park, which bounds the east and south borders of the area. **Maintaining access will be an important issue as development continues.**
- Fire danger in both Chugach State Park and Far North Bicentennial Park and on private land will continue to require monitoring.

Figure 30. Southeast Subarea Park Needs by Acres per 1,000 population

| Southeast Parks by Classification | MOA Existing Inventory | 2003 Need LOS 1.5 MIN | 2003 Need LOS 2.5 REC | 2020 Need LOS 1.5 MIN | 2020 Need LOS 2.5 REC |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Neighborhood Use Areas | 18 | -10 | -29 | -36 | -71 |
| Community Use Areas | 20 | -8 | -27 | -34 | -69 |
| Special Use Areas | 366 | 281 | 234 | 205 | 116 |
| Total | 404 | 263 | 178 | 135 | -24 |

- Continued wildlife management issues include improved trash disposal and development of areas to minimize wildlife encounters.

Facility Deficiencies

- This area has deficiencies in all aspects of recreational facilities, including the following. At the low end of the LOS, the area has a shortage of 4 soccer fields, 4 softball fields, 4 basketball courts, 8 playgrounds, 10 open playfields, 2 shelters, and 4 sledding areas by 2020.
- The area has adequate supply of indoor facilities within or close to the subarea with the exception of an indoor recreation center.

Access, Trails and Connectivity Needs

- Lack of connectivity of trails to the Bowl is a major problem. There are no major developed trails in the area. The only east-west trail is along Abbott Road and it terminates at Lake Otis.
- The trail along Birch Road is in need of repairs.
- Trail development is needed in the following areas:
 - Rabbit Creek Greenbelt

- Elmore Road
- Chugach State Park access
- Far North Bicentennial Park access to Tudor Crossing
- Potter Creek Greenbelt

Southeast Park District Recommendations

Upgrade Existing Parks

- Continue to upgrade existing parks and develop new Neighborhood Use facilities in dedicated parks, including:
 - Forsythe Park: improve access and picnic facilities.
 - Moen Park.
 - Elmore - Griffin Park: develop playground, playfield, and picnic area.
 - Little Rabbit Creek Bluff Park: develop playground, playfield, and picnic area.
- Community Use park improvements are needed in the following areas:
 - Section 36: develop master plan and develop portion to link with Stork Park.



- Storck Park: upgrade facilities, including picnic area, soccer field, ballfield, and open play area.
- Ruth Arcand Equestrian Center: upgrade existing facilities and improve trail system.

Rabbit Creek, Potter Creek, Little Survival Creek, and Little Rabbit Creek.

- Develop resource management plan for Section 36 allowing for necessary access sites.
- Develop fire management plan with Anchorage Fire Department.

Acquire Land and Develop New Parks

- Acquire and develop new park at Potter area: develop playground, playfield, and picnic area on HLB land.
- Acquire land and develop new Community Use park in O'Malley and Elmore Road area.
- Acquire access points for trailheads to Chugach State Park.

School-Park Partnership

- Develop school-park joint facilities at the following elementary school sites:
 - Rabbit Creek
 - Bowman
 - Huffman

Expand and Develop Recreation Facilities

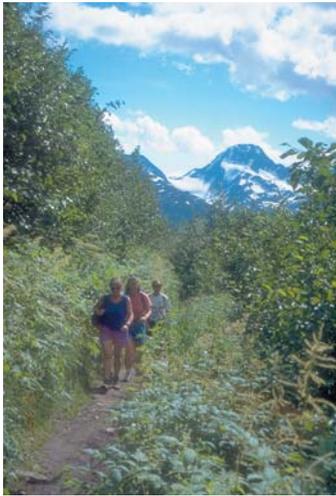
- Develop winter recreation area as part of Ruth Arcand and Anchorage Golf Course to expand economic benefits to the park system from these areas.
- Improve fields at Abbott-O-Rabbit (Ruth Arcand) with engineered fields to increase use.
- Upgrade high school fields with engineered field to increase community use.

Protect and Improve Natural Resources

- Continue to acquire, enhance, and develop greenbelts along

Develop Park Access, Trails and Connectivity

- Complete the Rabbit Creek trail connecting from the Seward Highway to Chugach State Park.
- Develop north-south corridors along Elmore and Birch Road and through Chugach State Park.
- Preserve and enhance trailhead access to Chugach State Park.
- Complete or establish easements for trails proposed in the **Areawide Trail Plan**.
- Identify access to Chugach State Park and connect municipal parkland, trails, and greenbelts to Chugach State Park where possible.
- Enhance access to Potter Marsh.
- Protect key drainages of the Potter Marsh Watershed.



Note: Completion of the Hillside District Plan will be the chief implementation element in the Southeast District.

Southwest

Park and Recreation District

Description

This area is primarily residential with about 70 percent single-family housing and 30 percent multi-family housing and is anticipated to grow with similar patterns. The current population is 24,511 and anticipated growth will have a population of 46,103 by 2020. The area directly south of Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport (TSAIA) includes the Sand Lake gravel pits and other vacant residential tracts that are poised for development.



Resources and Facilities

This area has a large concentration of Natural Resource Use areas, but has a low amount of developed parks. The major parks for this area include Kincaid Park with over 1,000 acres of natural open space with world-class summer and winter recreational trails, South Anchorage Sports Park, Javier de la Vega Sports Park, and Jewel Lake Park. The area has 22 athletic fields, 10 playgrounds, and 4 picnic shelters. In addition to the developed parks listed below, the subarea has over 1,769 acres of regional parks and open space, including Kincaid Park and 14 other sites.

Southwest Park District Issues and Needs

Park Shortages

- This area has deficiencies in various aspects of the park system and will have a shortage of 31 to 77 acres of Neighborhood Use and 15 to 61 acres of Community Use areas by 2020. (See Figure 31.)
- The area requires 3 to 7 new Neighborhood Use parks between 5 and 10 acres in size over the next 20 years without utilizing elementary school sites.
- The area will require 1 to 2 new Community Use parks in the next 20 years without utilizing middle school sites.

- NU parks are deficient in the following areas:

- Bayshore-Klatt
- Sand Lake
- Old Seward/Oceanview

- CU parks are deficient in the following areas:
 - Abbott Road and Lake Otis Parkway
 - Southport Subdivision
- Several of the parks that are classified as NU or CU have limited facilities or have not been developed.
- Portions of Kincaid Park are owned by TSAIA and leased to the Municipality.

Natural Resource Needs

- Although not a part of the Anchorage Bowl Park System and managed by the state of Alaska, the primary Natural Resource Use area is the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge. Improved access to the Coastal Wildlife Refuge in accordance with the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge Management Plan-Feb.. 1991, and completion of the Campbell Creek Greenbelt would reduce missing links in the system.
- If and where feasible the Municipality should continue its long-term use agreement with TSAIA to maintain those portions of Connors Lake and wetlands on TSAIA lands as Natural Resource Preservation Areas, recognizing that TSAIA maintains ownership and management of these areas.

Facility Deficiencies

- This area has a good supply of athletic facilities but is deficient in all aspects of Community Use facilities. At the low end of the LOS, the area has a shortage of 2 soccer fields, 4 playgrounds, 10 open playfields, and 3 outdoor skating areas by 2020.

Figure 31. Southwest Subarea Park Needs by Acres per 1,000 population

| Southwest Parks by Classification | MOA Existing Inventory | 2003 Need LOS 1.5 MIN | 2003 Need LOS 2.5 REC | 2020 Need LOS 1.5 MIN | 2020 Need LOS 2.5 REC |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Neighborhood Use Areas | 38 | 1 | -23 | -31 | -77 |
| Community Use Areas | 54 | 17 | -7 | -15 | -61 |
| Special Use Areas | 273 | 163 | 101 | 66 | -50 |
| Total | 365 | 181 | 71 | 20 | 188 |

- The area lacks an indoor recreation center but has an adequate supply of indoor pools and ice rinks to meet future demand.

Access, Trails, and Connectivity Needs

- The primary trail is the Campbell Creek Trail along the greenbelt. This area has a missing connection at Campbell Lake.
- Coastal access is limited or poorly delineated between Kincaid Park and Potter Marsh.
- The C Street Trail does not continue into the area and should be linked north.
- South Anchorage Sports Park and De La Vega Sports Park lack adequate links to the trail system.
- Access east-west to Kincaid Park should be improved.

Southwest Park District Recommendations

Upgrade Existing Parks

- Continue to upgrade existing parks and develop new Neighborhood Use facilities in dedicated parks, including:

- Johns Park: expand existing play area.
- Gladys Woods Park: develop new playground, playfield, and picnic areas.
- Edna Fisk: develop new playground areas.
- Linden Park: develop new playground, playfield, and picnic areas.
- Continue to upgrade existing Community Use parks, including:
 - Southport area
 - Connors Lake Park
 - Jewel Lake Park



Acquire Land and Develop New Parks

- Acquire and develop new Community Use park at Huffman and Old Seward.
- Maintain long-term lease of TSAIA lands for continued park uses.

School-Park Partnership

- Develop school-park joint facilities at the following elementary school sites:
 - Sand Lake
 - Gladys Woods
 - Kincaid
 - Klatt

Expand and Develop Recreation Facilities

- Continue to develop South Anchorage Sports Park with upgrades to parking and completion of athletic fields.
- Develop soccer complex at Kincaid Park along with expanded winter recreation area.
- Upgrade Kincaid Park indoor facilities.
- Develop indoor recreation facility to include public tennis.
- Connect Connors Lake Park to Campbell Creek Greenbelt Trail.
- Encourage pedestrian connections between Kincaid Park and Potter Marsh.
- Improve access to Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge at appropriate location.

Protect and Improve Natural Resources

- Continue to acquire, enhance, and develop greenbelts along Campbell Creek. This drainage way is heavily used with development along most areas of the creek. The water quality should be monitored and drainages into the area acquired and protected.
- Develop resource management plan for Kincaid Park and other Natural Resource Use areas.
- Develop wildlife management plans to maintain habitat and migration routes while allowing public access with limited impacts.



Develop Park Access, Trails, and Connectivity

- Complete the Campbell Creek Trail between Victor Road and Campbell Lake to the coast.
- Connect De La Vega Park to the trail system.
- Connect South Anchorage Sports Park to the C Street Trail.
- Improve Dimond Boulevard streetscape and pedestrian access.
- Improve access to Kincaid Park.



Strategic Action Plan



The Anchorage Bowl's parks, natural resource, and recreation facility system can preserve community values and protect residents' quality of life. It can specifically provide space for a range of recreational and community activities, and retain a dimension of the natural environment within community and citywide landscapes. Securing the future of this system becomes increasingly important as population growth puts pressures on finite amounts of land and increases the need for parks and recreational facilities.

This chapter identifies the strategic actions the Municipality should take immediately and in the next two to five years to begin the successful implementation of this **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan**. These will ensure that the overall system can meet the stated goals of the residents well into the future. Full implementation, however, is a major undertaking. The last time the Municipality addressed these comprehensive issues was in the 1985 Plan.

Today, rapid development of the remaining land supply, an expanding population, a failure to develop the facilities to keep up with population growth, and a failure to establish adequate funding support to maintain and operate core services has left the Municipality in a position of playing catch-up to meet residents' needs. It is unrealistic to think that as the population continues to grow that the city will be able to continue to keep pace with new park and recreation needs without significant changes in current management, maintenance and funding practices of the Parks and Recreation Department.

The following **Strategic Action Plan** outlines a systematic and realistic approach to implementation of the next steps and the first phase (two to five years) of the Plan. This Strategic Action Plan should be evaluated each year to note progress and to refocus energy for the next 18 months' actions. The plan should be updated as necessary every three to five years in order for the Municipality to continue moving toward full implementation as outlined in Chapter 6.

Immediate Next Steps

The Strategic Framework Plan provides the long-term guidance to begin building a strong and responsive Parks and Recreation Department. To be successful, the Municipality must begin preparing for change incrementally. The **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** will establish the long-term objectives to reshape the Parks and Recreation Department over the next 20 years.

To begin the process, it will be important to identify key short-term actions that can provide immediate success and build confidence in the Parks and Recreation Department from its staff, the general public, user groups, and business leaders. These actions must be achievable in a short timeframe.

The goals, objectives, and actions outlined on the next few pages provide a variety of opportunities to engage the community in rebuilding the Parks and Recreation Department. Most of these actions shall be carried out by the department's staff in work programs, CIP projects, and with continued oversight and direction of the Parks and Recreation Commission. Many of these actions have already been begun to be implemented.

The key actions include:

- Adopt the **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** as an element of **Title 21 Land Use Code** and **Anchorage 2020**.
- √ The Parks and Recreation Department has been elevated to a department status under the Office of Economic and Community Development.
- √ The Department has completed the reorganization of the Parks and Recreation Department to establish community-based park and recreation districts that correspond to the **Anchorage**

2020 five subareas. The result is to provide direct public involvement with the day-to-day operations of the core services provided by the Parks and Recreation Department through local based district managers.

- Establish School-Park Partnership by developing a joint-use agreement with ASD that clearly define roles and responsibilities as well as a sound and equitable financial plan for parks and recreation to fund school development beyond that which the State school design standards fund.
- Elevate the status of the Parks and Recreation Commission with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for parks and recreation. Establish clear guidelines and policies for the Commission that outlines their duties and responsibilities.
- √ We have implemented the Core Services Model for parks and recreation and identify the basic programs that will be provided. (See Chapter 3.) Develop a budget and funding sources to reflect adequate and consistent funding of these services.
- √ A fee policy has been adopted that utilizes the Core Services Model and provides a fair and equitable fee structure for the Municipality to use in the budget process.
- Park planning policies, management decisions, and acquisition plans shall be guided by relevant policies in Chapter 6, by Park Classification Standards in Chapter 7, and by the maps of this Plan and where applicable on ASD joint site, by Anchorage School District policies and standards.
- Establish a consistent and reliable funding source to allow the city to maintain current levels of services.



* √ indicates completed actions

√ A park foundation has been established and has raised substantial investments in the first year to build broad community support. This group can help provide focus, leadership, and name recognition.

- Establish a friends of Anchorage parks non-profit 501-C-3 organization composed of all park and recreation user groups to help raise awareness of the importance of parks and recreation to the community through improved public relations, stable funding, and support for new initiatives. It is important that a single organization bring all user groups together to present a unified front in the support of parks and recreation.



- Establish a formal public process policy that fosters park planning, development, and operations at the public level. This should include establishment of park districts that encourage public involvement at all levels including affected Community Councils, user groups, and organizations in the area.

- Generate consistent support for park bonds. The CIP and proposed park bond package should be reviewed annually to determine how well it meets the broad community support necessary for success. Where necessary, it should be modified and expanded to reflect a balance of parks and recreation system improvements that better meet the community needs, including the addition or acquisition of critical natural resource use and neighborhood parkland.

- Follow up on the recreation survey by conducting additional surveys to identify issues related to park use, user fee policies, bond support, and core services.

√ We have established an active working partnership with the Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau to promote the tourism value of the parks and recreation system and are coordinating with ACVB to create a special events coordinator to promote special events.

- Initiate planning to locate appropriate site for development of winter recreation centers and related winter facilities.

- Work with Mayor's Youth Council, aging, minority, and special needs population to establish guidelines for enhanced services.

- Establish a joint working group of public agencies responsible for managing public lands for park and recreation purposes including to identify, design, and manage future access points to Chugach State Park.

- Establish an active working partnership with the Anchorage business community to promote economic benefits and value of the parks and recreation system.

- Develop a set of measurable indicators that are tied directly to park benefits, core values, goals, objectives, and actions and that are to be evaluated annually as a means of evaluating the progress of the Plan's implementation.

Strategic Actions

Steps for the Municipality to take in the next two to five years are critical, both in terms of protecting future opportunities and in terms of developing a successful track record and foundation for future action. The Strategic Actions presented below are directly taken from the comprehensive recommendations presented in Chapter 6 and are intended to build from initial successes created above. What makes specific actions “strategic” is that they meet a number of criteria that makes their implementation more feasible and/or necessary in the next two to five years, including:

- Attract broad community support;
- Are sound, defensible, and achievable;
- Meet measurable goals and objectives and have clearly definable milestones; and
- Can be accomplished in a short time with available resources and funding.

Strategic Actions are presented within four categories listed below. These can be likened to the four legs of a table. Efforts need to be made in all of these categories simultaneously and in a balanced approach in order “for the table to stand.”

1. Land Base and Physical Framework Criteria

These are actions to secure the additional land allocations and acquisitions needed to help develop an inter-related network of facilities, parks, trails, and corridors.

2. Projects

Actions to develop, improve, upgrade, maintain, and plan and design facilities and specific sites.

3. Policy

Plan adoption, development of procedures, regulations, and practices.

4. Parks and Recreation Department Organization

Build the Municipality’s Parks and Recreation Department capacity, including identification of sustainable funding, a unified and transparent budget, effective use of staff and volunteers, an implementation timeline, and accountability to the public.

Through the complementary, incremental, and balanced implementation of Strategic Actions under each of these categories, the Municipality will be able to maximize use of the available resources for the fullest effect.

Strategic Action Categories

1. Land Base and Physical Framework Criteria

Parks

Whether serving neighborhoods or greater segments of population, the acreage allocations for parks should be directly related to the population of an area. Therefore, municipal allocations and acquisitions shall be planned to meet location-specific, quantifiable needs on an equitable basis using minimum LOS standards for each of the five subarea park districts from Chapter 7.

Natural Resources

Natural resource allocations (trails, greenbelt corridors, preservation and conservation, etc.) are based on environmental, social, and recreational values, which are not necessarily tied to population.

Acquisition will vary from retention of existing municipal parks and HLB assets that are identified as preservation lands, transfers of state or federal lands, partnerships with land trusts for conservation easements, to fee-simple purchases.

Land Base/Physical Framework

In order to achieve an integrated and connected system of parks,



public facilities, schools, and neighborhoods linked by trails and recreational corridors, a first priority of the Municipality must be to designate a general direction in terms of acquisition, development, and related land use decision-making. A “physical framework” for this system is presented in the conceptual maps (Maps 1-7).

Planning and securing specific critical elements that exist in the corridors that make this framework possible should be a key priority before growth limits the options.

Applicable Strategic Action:

- Conduct natural resource plans for Natural Resource Use areas to identify lands to be classified as preservation, conservation, and reserve for future development.
- Identify critical missing links in the existing system and work to acquire through land transfer, easements, or purchase.
- Develop facilities in underdeveloped areas with deficiencies in neighborhood and community use parks.
- Establish formal school-park agreement.

2. Projects

Physical projects provide for the upgrade of existing recreational facilities and the development of new facilities to meet growing municipal needs. To be successful, projects must be planned, designed, built, or upgraded to meet community needs and standards.

Applicable Strategic Action:

- Develop and adopt park, natural resource, and recreation facility design standards and guidelines.
- Develop a CIP that is responsive to community needs and provides a

balanced approach to park, natural resource, and recreation facility development.

3. Policy

These are the public policies and procedures that the municipal government must undertake to ensure the implementation of the broad goals and objectives. This step would include new policies and procedures, as well as an assessment of existing related policies. Steps include:

- Adoption of the **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan.**
- Revision of municipal ordinances and codes to reflect Plan updates.
- Title 21 shall be the governing body for land use decisions.
- Formation of joint-use agreements with schools, government, and private organizations.

Applicable Strategic Policies include the following:

- The Parks and Recreation Department, in cooperation with other municipal, state, and federal departments, shall be the lead agency for park and recreation planning, operation, and maintenance.
- Parks and recreation facilities will be designed and developed in accordance with the expressed interests of area residents. The five park districts shall work with local community councils and user groups to recommend new park and recreation facility development on an annual basis.
- Community involvement and input shall be actively solicited to ensure a responsive and representative parks and recreation program and to ensure that parks are sited to provide maximum user benefit with a minimum of community disturbance.



- The Municipality shall provide continuing park and recreation facility maintenance to protect the long-term vitality of facilities and to protect the health and safety of the public.
- The Municipality and ASD shall, to the extent practicable, develop joint school-park facility areas in order to provide both educational and recreational services to adjacent population in a convenient and efficient manner.
- The Municipality shall encourage private-public collaboration for acquisition, development, and maintenance of recreational spaces, parks, sports fields, public use facilities, and trails.
- Deficiencies in neighborhood and community parks will be used in setting priorities for capital improvement programming based on the minimum LOS standard.
- The Municipality shall adopt LOS standards for parks, recreation facilities, and trails.
- The municipal park and greenbelt system shall facilitate development of an integrated trail system where it is appropriate to provide trail linkages between neighborhoods, schools, park sites, and major public facilities.
- The Municipality shall establish Natural Resource Preservation areas management methods and standards for the protection of unique land and water relationships, fish and wildlife habitats, high-value wetlands, riparian corridors, and vistas.



years. These tools include the staff resources and the dedicated funding required to manage, direct, plan, build, maintain, and operate park and recreational facilities as an entrepreneurial organization.

Applicable Strategic Action:

- Finance the implementation of the plan on a sustainable basis.
- Establish a system for facilitating and financing key catalytic improvements as outlined.
- Recommended financing tools include:
 - Establish clearly defined annual budgets that are based on the cost to provide recreational services per population served.
 - Grants and other forms of funding, including Transportation Equity Act (TEA) 21 funding, state, federal, and the Park Foundation.
- Develop an appropriate user-fee schedule to cover a portion of annual operations costs.
- The existing employee base is understaffed in the Parks and Recreation Department and will require additional staff to implement the Plan and meet current recreation demands.

4. Parks and Recreation Department Organization

This is one of the most critical components of a successful implementation strategy, and has been the major focus of the Department during the last 2

Annual Updates and Plan Modifications

The primary purpose in updating the Plan will be to assess adequate distribution of neighborhood use, community use, special use, and recreation facilities throughout the Anchorage Bowl. The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) should be used in conjunction with the Plan on an annual basis to determine where development is required to provide for a balanced and equitable distribution of parks and facilities.

The information presented in the Plan creates a set of tools for determining the future needs of the Anchorage Bowl parks and recreation system. The needs are presented in the form of an LOS guideline. The recommended LOS, along with user information about emerging trends can be compared to the current inventory for each park type and facility to determine if the current LOS meets or exceeds the standard or if there is a deficit. If a deficit exists, the community can prioritize funding to create or enhance parks and facilities to relieve the deficit before developing additional parks or facilities in other areas.

This is an ongoing interactive and systematic process that must include sound public involvement, accurate measurements of existing facilities, realistic appraisal of the financial capabilities, and fair and honest leadership.

Below is an outline of the steps necessary to update the Plan annually for the CIP process. No single step should be left out, nor should any single step be considered the only appropriate source of information to base a decision on.

In the end, it must also be recognized that it is an imperfect system that will, by necessity, require compromise and trade-offs to achieve a balanced and equitable system of parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities for the entire community.

Appendix C provides a set of forms to be used to promote a uniform process of identifying and scoring potential projects for inclusion in the annual CIP.

Step One: Update of Park Inventory

The Parks and Recreation Department shall conduct an annual update of the physical inventory of parks and facilities every 3-5 years. This should list all new development, acquisition, or disposal of parkland that has occurred during the past years.

Step Two: Annual Update of City Population

The Planning Department shall provide adjusted population numbers for each of the five park districts as outlined in the Plan. For annual updates, this can be based on housing starts, building permits, or other methods that provide a reasonable accurate reflection of the population for each area.

Step Three: Identify Park Needs

Calculate the current LOS for the Anchorage Bowl and the five park districts using the inventory and population update and establish a range of annual needs between the minimum and desired LOS provided. Review the Natural Resources Inventory and identify critical natural resource parcels based on function and need.

Step Four: Evaluate Annual Income, Expenditures, and Core Services

Prepare an annual budget that provides an accurate accounting of programs and services using the activity-based cost accounting methodology. Update the Core Service model through a blue-ribbon panel of park staff and community leaders. Determine available funding for the next fiscal year and develop a target budget.



Step Five: Conduct Public Involvement

The Parks and Recreation Department shall conduct a variety of public involvement processes each year to help determine public use, attitudes, and demand for future development. This can include a number of steps, but should include some form of each of the following:

- Participation: Review annual rates of participation at those recreational activities that permit easy records to be kept. This includes organized sporting events, programs and classes, rentals, and major facilities.
 - Annual Survey: Conduct an annual survey to determine public perceptions of the department, levels of participation in a variety of activities and park visits, and desire for new development and willingness to pay.
 - Benchmark Update: Maintain contact with appropriate benchmark cities and share pertinent data on an annual basis.
 - Community Council: Each park district should forward annual park budget adjustments and CIP recommendations to the Parks and Recreation Commission on an annual basis.
- Adjust the LOS range and calculate the park needs for the next fiscal year using the tables found in Appendix C.
 - Community Application for CIP – Review annual applications from Community Councils, user groups and individuals for consideration on the CIP list. (See Appendix C for sample form.)
 - Score the proposed CIP using the above information from forms found in Appendix C. The scoring process should begin at the five park district subareas for the first round to identify local needs. These score sheets should then be reviewed by park staff and forwarded to a park needs committee consisting of representation from the Parks and Recreation Commission, staff, and community representatives from the five park districts.
 - Once the final project scoring is complete and projects have been ranked the final step is to establish a balance between projected costs and funding levels for both the CIP and the operating budget.
 - The Parks and Recreation Department will then administer an annual work program, budget, and CIP.

Step Six: Evaluate LOS with Public Involvement

Compare the range of LOS with current public involvement findings and the financial ability of the department to fund programs and new development. This should include the following steps:

Maps

Map 1: Anchorage Bowl Park System

Map 2: Neighborhood Use Areas

Map 3: Community Use Areas

Map 4: Athletic & Winter Special Use Areas

Map 5: Indoor Recreation Special Use Areas

Map 6: Natural Resource Use Areas

Map 7: Recreation Trails and Connections

Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan

Map Use

The **Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan** maps are intended for general reference and planning purposes only. Except for actual school sites, these maps are not intended to represent specific locations of new park parcels.

For areas with known deficiencies in the various park classification categories, the Municipality would target acquisition of new sites within the boundaries of the highlighted yellow circles (for Maps 2 & 3), and at the identified school sites (Maps 2, 3, & 4). These areas of deficiency are defined by and based on standards within the various park classifications.

For proposed Natural Resource Preservation and Conservation sites (Map 6), it is the direction of this plan for the Municipality and other land managing agencies to pursue appropriate protection methods (which might include, but is not limited to, fee-simple acquisition) for the applicable resources at each site.

The maps are described below:

Map 1 – Anchorage Bowl Park System: Map shows generalized existing park locations, including the existing park locations and other lands that are used as parks under various land use agreements.

Map 2 – Neighborhood Use Areas: Map includes existing (*green*), deficient areas (*yellow*), and potential school-park partnership sites at elementary schools (*pink*).

Map 3 - Community Use Areas: Map includes existing sites (*green*), deficient areas (*yellow*), and potential school-park partnership sites at middle schools (*pink*).

Map 4 - Athletic & Winter Special Use Areas: Map includes existing athletic and winter facilities (*green*), deficient areas for athletic and winter facilities (*yellow*), and potential special use areas for athletic and winter facilities at high schools (*pink*).

Map 5 - Indoor Recreation Special Use Areas: Map includes existing indoor recreation special use areas, including recreation centers (*red*), public and private indoor ice arenas (*blue*), indoor swimming pools (*orange*), and community school program sites (*yellow*).

Map 6 - Natural Resource Use Areas: Map includes location of existing Natural Resource-Preservation (brown) and Conservation (tan) resources within municipal park boundaries and existing parks (green).

Map 7 - Recreation Trails and Connections: Map includes existing and proposed recreation trails. The locations of proposed trails in Map 7 refer to idealized locations for future trails, new scenic greenbelts, and linear greenbelt connectors between parks, schools, and neighborhoods.

Note: Maps 6 & 7 are for reference and planning purposes. These two maps depict existing and proposed recreation trails, which are formally delineated and administered by the Municipality's **Areawide Trails Plan** (1997).