



Valley of the Moon Park Site Plan Update

Advisory Group Meeting #2

April 15, 2014 • Federation of Community Councils Office

Overview:

Anchorage Parks and Recreation is updating the site plan for the Valley of the Moon Park. To ensure that future improvements align with the desires of the community, Parks and Recreation is working with an advisory group.

The second advisory group meeting for the Valley of the Moon Park site plan update took place on April 15, 2014.

Attendees:

Anna Bryant, Penny Burt, Mark Butler, Josh Durand (P&R), Lanie Fleischer, Matt Johnson, Susan Miller, Nick Moe, Kelsey Parpart, Steve Rafuse (P&R), Melonie Rieck, and Dana Myers

Meeting Synopsis:

The meeting began with Parks & Recreation, Park Planner Steve Rafuse providing a review of the project goals and the purpose of the site plan update. Steve reviewed the main issues identified in the first meeting and reiterated the role of the advisory group.

Project Recap: Following the review of background information, Steve provided a recap of the common themes from the first meeting as captured in the meeting minutes. The group agreed that the common themes presented were consistent with comments from the first meeting. Some advisory group members asked questions and provided additional points of clarification on the themes presented. Anchorage Parks and Recreation, Park Planner Josh Durand provided clarification on the departments intent not to purchase the adjacent 3 acre property to the east, citing limited funds and capacity to manage additional park lands at this time.

Concept Alternatives: Building on the discussion of common themes, Josh Durand presented four concept alternatives for Valley of the Moon Park. Each concept alternative incorporates advisory group feedback and provides a unique layout of amenities based on existing site conditions and professional parks and open space design principles. The concept alternatives presented were intended to be a conversation starter from which a preferred alternative would originate through conversation and consensus building. Advisory group members were asked to elaborate on several questions during the discussion, these included: Which concept do you prefer and why? What specific elements of these concepts do you like? What doesn't work and why? The following pages provide a description and illustration of each conceptual design alternative.

Design Alternative 1

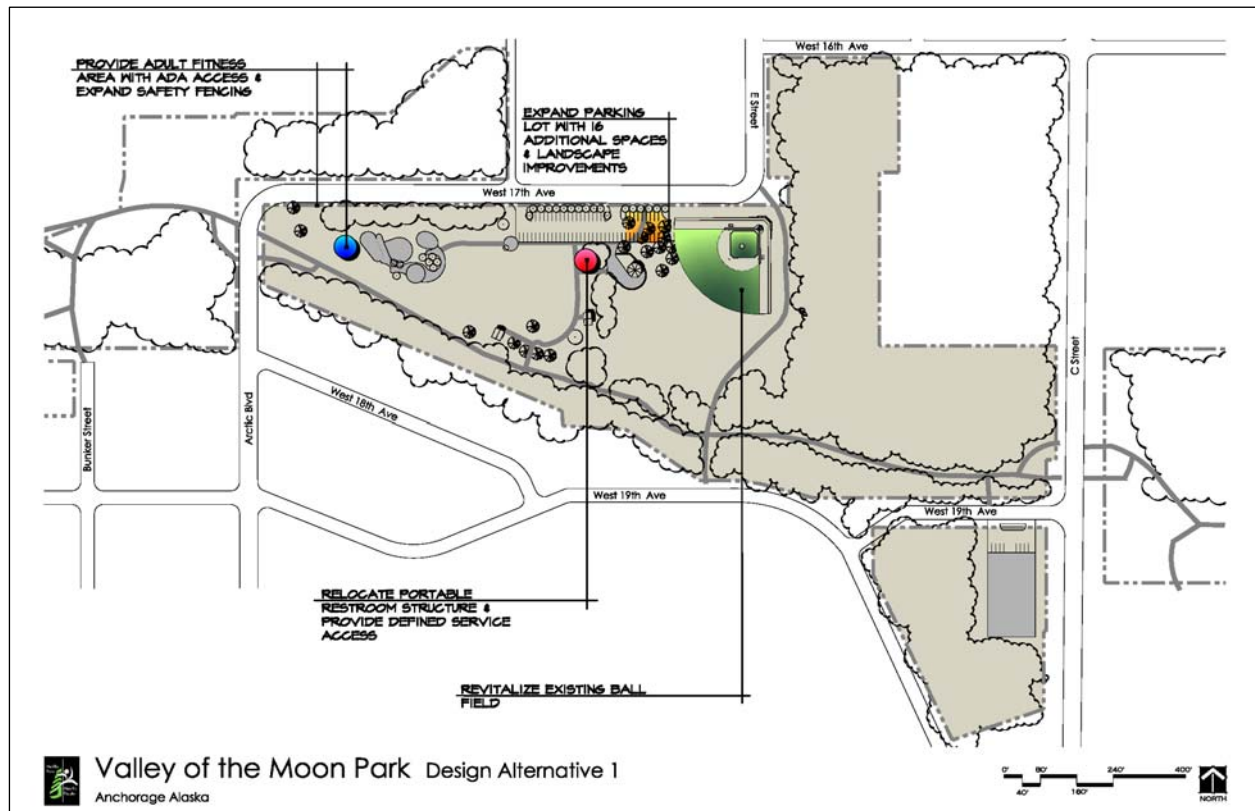


Illustration 1: Design Alternative 1

Design Alternative 1 Description:

1. Provides an adult fitness area with seating and ADA access.
2. Extends fencing east on along 17th avenue to provide improved safety for the adjacent playground.
3. Expands the existing parking lot to the east with an additional 16 parking spaces. Landscaping improvements will also occur just north of the expanded parking lot.
4. Relocates the restroom structure just south of the existing parking lot. Improved service access and landscape screening will be provided.
5. Rehabilitates the existing ball field for active recreation. Use of the field will be available for permitted and can be used on first come first serve basis.

Design Alternative 2

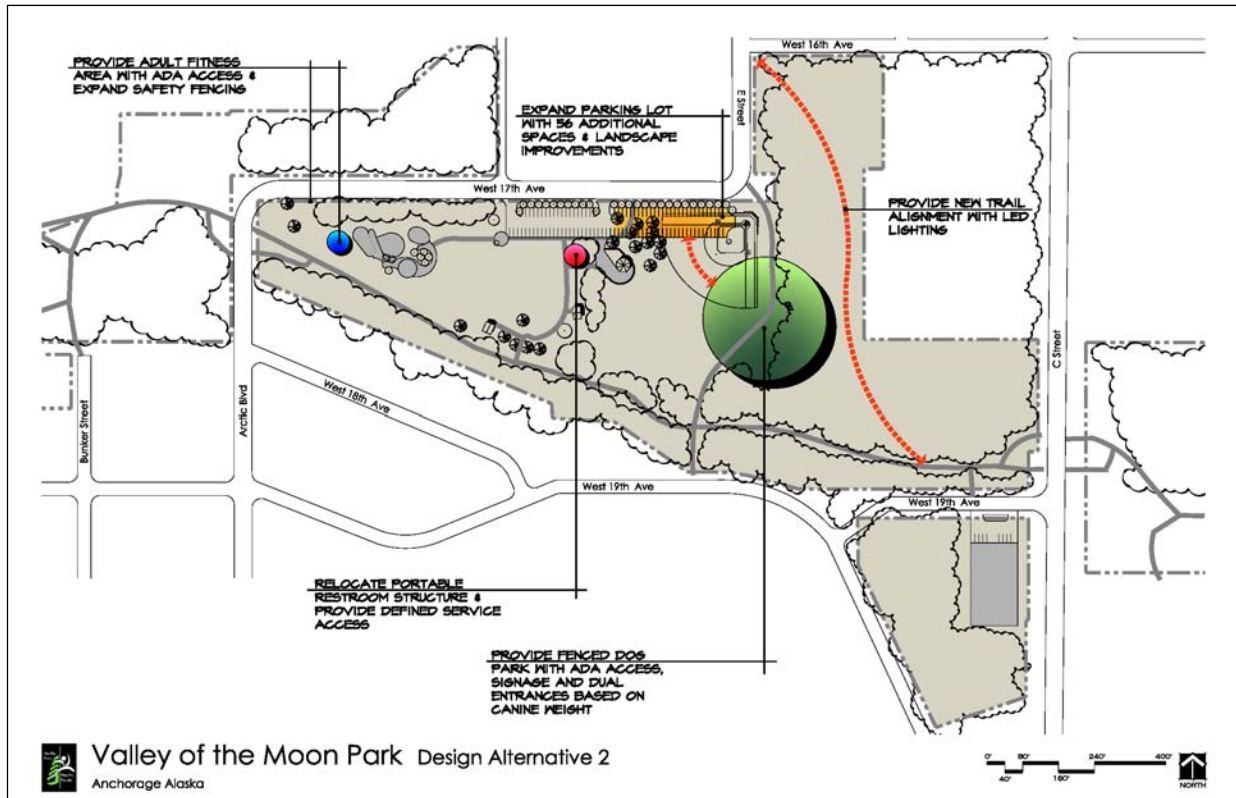


Illustration 2: Design Alternative 2

Design Alternative 2 Description:

1. Provides an adult fitness area with seating and ADA access.
2. Extends fencing east on along 17th Avenue to provide improved safety for the adjacent playground.
3. Expands the existing parking lot to the east with an additional 56 parking spaces. Landscaping improvements will also occur just north of the expanded parking lot.
4. Relocates the restroom structure just south of the existing parking lot. Improved service access and landscape screening will be provided.
5. Eliminates the existing ball field.
6. Provides a ½ acre fenced dog park with separate areas and entrances based on canine weight.
7. A new paved and illuminated trail will provide a north south connection through the park.

Design Alternative 3

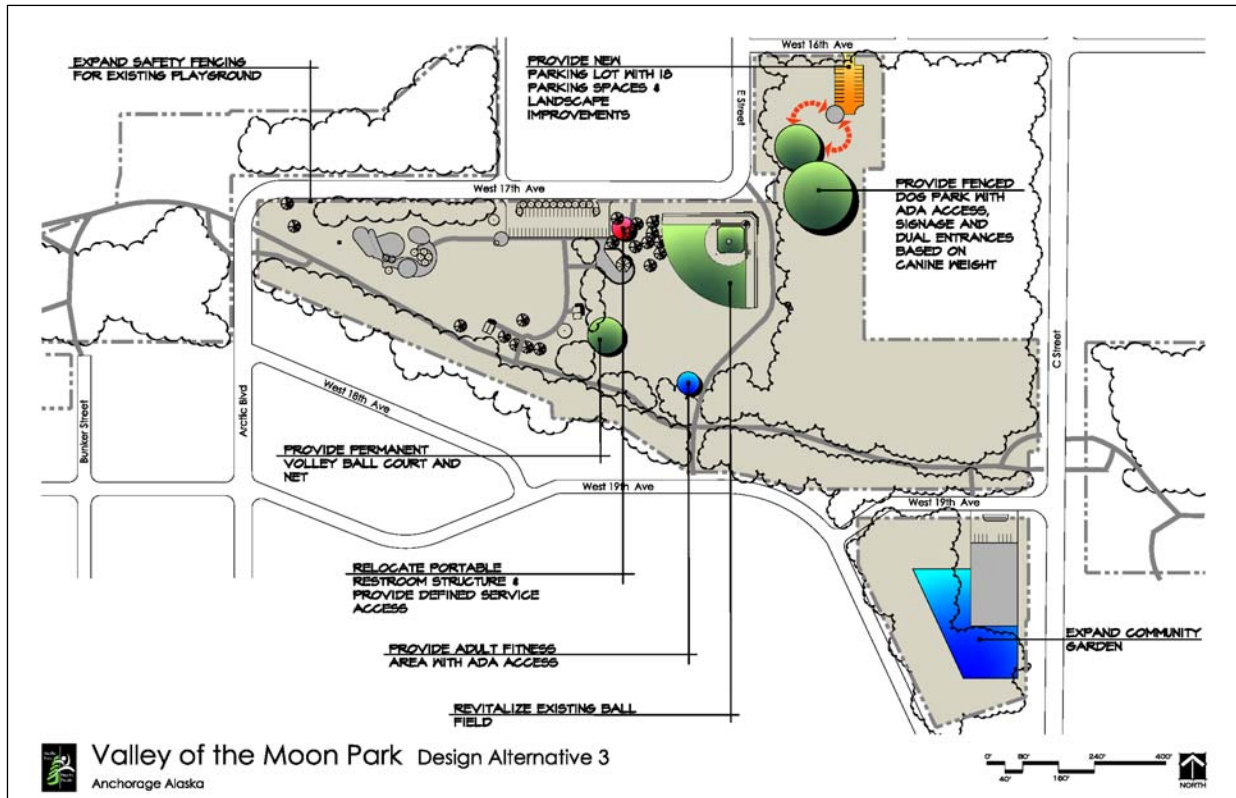


Illustration 3: Design Alternative 3

Design Alternative 3 Description:

1. Provides an adult fitness area with seating and ADA access.
2. Extends fencing east on along 17th avenue to provide improved safety for the adjacent playground.
3. Relocates the restroom structure just east of the existing parking lot. Improved service access and landscape screening will be provided.
4. Provides a new parking lot off of 16th Avenue with 18 parking spaces.
5. Rehabilitates the existing ball field for active recreation. Use of the field will be available for permitted and can be used on first come first serve basis.
6. Relocates the restroom structure just south of the existing parking lot. Improved service access and landscape screening will be provided.
7. Provides a permanent volley ball court and net.
8. Provides a ½ acre fenced dog park with separate areas and entrances based on canine weight.

Design Alternative 4

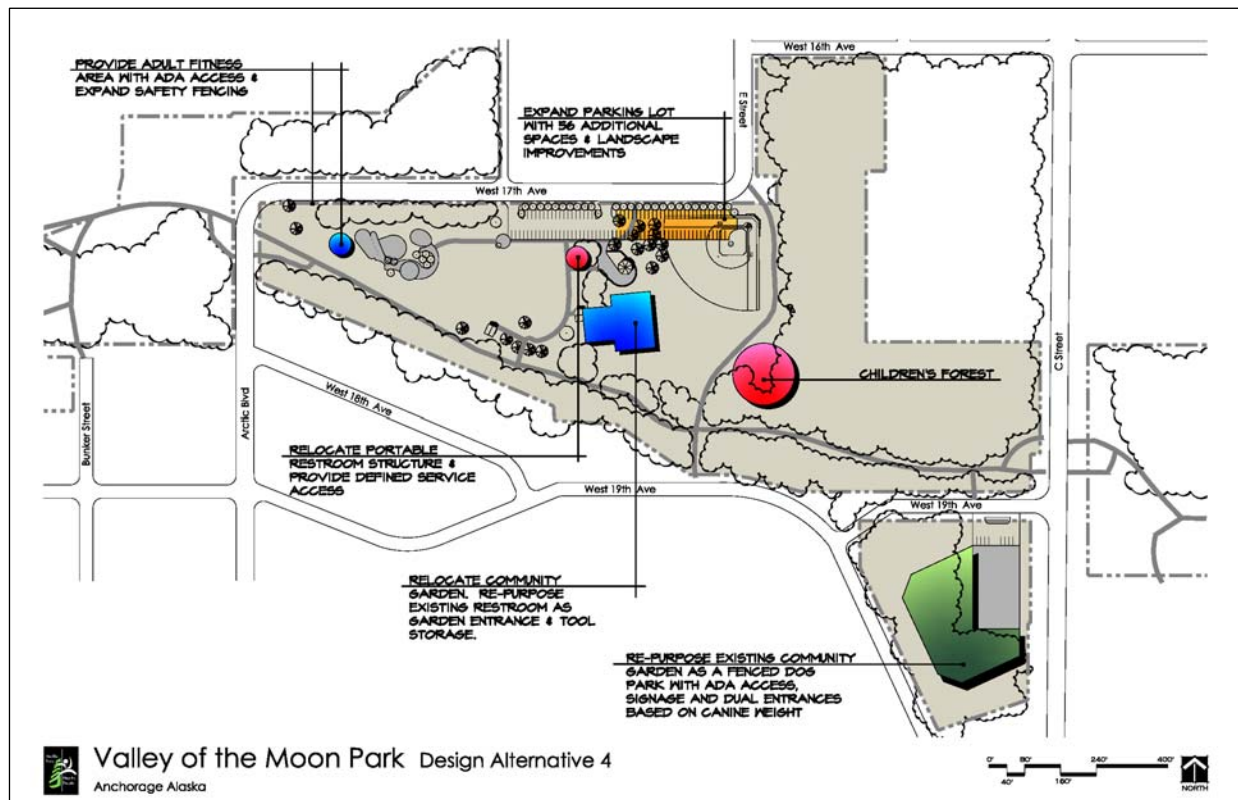


Illustration 4: Design Alternative 4

Design Alternative 4 Description:

1. Provides an adult fitness area with seating and ADA access.
2. Extends fencing east on along 17th avenue to provide improved safety for the adjacent playground.
3. Expands the existing parking lot to the east with an additional 56 parking spaces. Landscaping improvements will also occur just north of the expanded parking lot.
4. Relocates the restroom structure just south of the existing parking lot. Improved service access and landscape screening will be provided.
5. Eliminates the existing ball field.
6. Re-purposes the existing community garden to provide a 3/4 acre fenced dog park with separate areas and entrances based on canine weight.
7. Designates a ¼ acre of the forest for to be developed as a “Children’s Forest”.
8. Relocates the fenced community garden in the center of the park while re-purposing the permanent restroom structure as the garden entrance.

Individual Group Member Comments:

Following the presentation of the four concept alternatives, the meeting continued with each advisory group member sharing their experiences with the park. Advisory group members expressed their thoughts and concerns and discussed which concept alternatives they preferred and why.

The following list is a summary of comments from individual members of the advisory group.

Penny Burt:

- Likes concept #4 because the dog park is separated from the other uses
- Feels that it is okay to use the undeveloped E St/16th Ave area of the park for active uses
- Supports concept #3 (prefers over #4)

Lanie Fleischer:

- Does not like community garden in the middle of the park because the open space is often used for picnics and play (concept #4); if community garden is moved it would be preferable to move it to the current location of the ball field to preserve the open space
- Likes adult fitness area by the playground
- Likes driving by community gardens on C Street and watching it grow through the season
- Likes concept #2: dog park in woods, re-routed bike path through the woods, and extra parking
- Remove the dugouts and replace with benches to prevent undesirable behavior taking place in the dugouts and to eliminate hiding places and litter

Melonie Rieck:

- Does not like the idea of moving the community garden as proposed in concept #4; “it takes a long time to make a good garden”, “I don’t like being on display like a zoo animal” referring to the idea of a highly visible community garden in the middle of the Park
- Likes the dog park in concept #2 but prefers the dog park moved closer to the parking lot - “nobody is going to hang out between the dog park and parking lot”
- Adult Fitness: likes location near playground
- Feels that access between 16th and E St to the parking lot in concept #3 will be dangerous
- Does not like the bike path in concept #2, cites that as a woman there is a feeling/perception of danger of traveling through the woods

Nick Moe:

- Likes permanent volleyball court in concept #3
- Does not like the dog park and community garden switched as proposed in concept #4
- Likes expanding the community garden (concept #3) but closer to 19th Ave
- Sees an opportunity for education at the community garden

- Prefers the adult fitness station in a more central location, cites that it is may be awkward for single males to work out near a playground (P&R response: the design would include a small plaza to provide a comfortable separation but still maintain a line of sight so that parents could watch their children on the playground)
- Add special parking for food truck vendors
- Promote more bike and pedestrian access as well as more visible public transit
- Asked about the absence of a pump track from the design alternatives (P&R response: the Parks department is currently working on pump tracks and other bike facilities in other parks and recommends that this new use is not tested at Valley of the Moon Park at this time)
- It is important to locate the dog park as far away from the creek as possible to protect water quality

Susan Miller:

- Clearly feels that concept #3 is the best
- Would like to add the Children’s Forest from concept #4 to concept #3 and include archway entrances in the design
- Prefers adult fitness station near the playground

Mark Butler:

- Park is a highly successful neighborhood park but also serves as a busy community use/regional park
- The dog park creates a regional attraction
- Would like to activate the far western side of the park – adult fitness is okay
- Extend the fence from Arctic to the parking lot
- Extending the parking lot to east of its existing location is a logical location, consider the possibility of gated overflow parking that could accommodate additional parking on busy summer days and during events
- Strongly dislikes the new bike trail alignment in concept #2; cites that any new trail will need visual buffers which will lead to additional tree removal
- Proposes aligning the N/S bike trail on the east side of the E St bollards from park to 15th Ave to improve safety
- The dog park in concept #3 has the least visual impact
- Not interested in building a large dog park
- Expanding the community garden as proposed in concept #3 is okay
- Likes to keep the open field on the east side of the park for open play

Kelsey Parpart:

- Likes concept #2; it is the only concept that addresses the homeless population
- Move dog park closer to the parking lot in concept #2
- Likes the expanded community garden in concept #3
- Does not like the permanent volleyball courts

Matt Johnson:

- Does not like feel the need to keep the ball field, cites “not a fan of baseball at the ball fields”, “soccer is exploding in Anchorage
- Prefers that dog park activities are separate from other activities, tucked into an edge
- Prefers concept #2
- Is “not crazy about the volleyball courts”
- Likes the idea of expanding the open space

Summary of Consensus Items:

Restrooms: There is consensus among the advisory group to move the port-a-potties and screen to a serviceable location just south of the parking lot.

Adult Fitness Equipment: The advisory group supports the addition of an adult fitness station located west of the playground. This location would allow adults to work out and supervise their children on the playground. A plaza is recommended to provide a comfortable separation but still maintain a line of sight so that parents are able to watch their children on the playground. An access trail connecting directly to the Chester Creek Trail should also be considered in the design.

Parking Lot: The group agrees that additional parking at the Valley of the Moon Park will help alleviate overflow parking on 17th Ave. However, the location and amount of parking to be added has yet to be resolved. The four proposed design alternatives include between 16 and 56 additional spaces. Conversation between the group and Parks and Recreation staff suggest that somewhere in the middle would be most appropriate. The group agrees that an expansion of the parking lot east of its current location is, at present, the most logical location but expressed some interest in exploring the feasibility of a small parking lot off of 16th Ave.

Dog Park: The group acknowledges the growing trend of the ball field as an off-leash dog area. The group agrees that the addition of a new off-leash dog park should have direct access to a parking lot and separate entrances for dogs based on canine weight.

Open Space: The advisory group indicated a high level of support in favor of preserving the Park’s existing open space.

Forest: The group agrees on the importance of protecting the character of the woods as a natural area and buffer. The group has also recognized that homeless camps and other undesirable activity, such as drinking and substance abuse, negatively affect park users experience and the perception of safety in the park. The group has discussed ways to find a balance between protecting the character of the woods and activating the space to create positive use.

Community Garden: The group showed strong support for expanding the community garden in its current location.

Summary of Items for Further Discussion:

Dog Park: The group acknowledges the growing popularity of the ball field being used as an off-leash dog area. The group generally agrees that any new off-leash dog area should be located at a considerable distance from Chester Creek to minimize further degradation of water quality. Adequate separation from other park amenities and the preservation of open space should be considered in design and site location as well.

Locations up for discussion are to the east of the current parking lot in the general vicinity of the ball field and in the northern panhandle of the park to the east of E St and south of 16th Ave. The design alternatives provide for a dog park approximately .5 Acres in size.

Ball Field: There was some support for preserving the ball field in its present location. However, the group as a whole tended to favor other uses such as additional parking, a dog park, and open space for the area.

Additionally, Parks and Recreation contacted Anchorage West Little League. The organization indicated that they have no future plans to use the ball field at Valley of the Moon Park. If the ball field is to remain, members of the advisory group asked to have the dugouts removed in order to deter misuse.

Safety: The close proximity of playground equipment to the road was recognized as a safety concern. The advisory group agreed that some capacity of additional fencing from Arctic Blvd to the parking lot on 17th Ave was needed.

Undesirable activity such as substance abuse in the baseball dugout and homeless camps in the forest was widely recognized as a safety concern. Activating these spaces with trails, a dog park, pump track or children's fairy forest could help shift that activity away from the park.

Bike Trail: The group acknowledged the north-south bike path as an important trail-street connector. Rerouting the trail may be necessary to avoid conflicts with a future dog park.

Volleyball: The advisory group was divided on the issue of adding permanent volleyball courts. Those who were opposed cited the loss of open space necessary to accommodate permanent volleyball courts as the main drawback and that volleyball can still be played at the Park without developing a permanent footprint.

Children's Forest: The Children's Forest was brought up with little discussion. Ideas included adding an archway and soft surface trails.

Next Meeting:

The next advisory group meeting will be April 29th (6-8pm) at the Federation of Community Councils office on 1057 West Fireweed Lane.