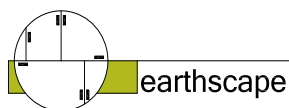




# Elderberry Park Master Plan

December 2015



Municipality of Anchorage  
with assistance from  
Earthscape, LLC



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# Chapter I: Introduction

*This chapter provides an introduction and overview of the Elderberry Park Master Plan. It includes background information about the park, highlights the purpose of the Master Plan, and provides an overview of the Parks and Recreation Department's guiding principles.*

## Overview

Elderberry Park is a 1.46 acre neighborhood-use park located in the Bootlegger Cove neighborhood in downtown Anchorage. The park serves both the local neighborhood as well as the larger community and is a popular tourist destination and access point to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. The park features outstanding views of the Cook Inlet, a 2-5 and 5-12 play area, a small parking lot, walkways and a central plaza. Elderberry Park is also the home of the historic Oscar Anderson House.

Despite Elderberry Park's relatively small size, the park is one of Anchorage's busiest and most popular public spaces. The park's proximity to downtown combined with outstanding views of the Cook Inlet, the Oscar Anderson House Museum and access to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail draw a large number of visitors to the park. The park also provides valuable greenspace for neighborhood residents who enjoy the play area and open space.



Figure 1: View of Cook Inlet from Elderberry Park

## Background

Elderberry Park is one of Anchorage's oldest public spaces. Located in Block 35 of the original town site, Elderberry Park was acquired from the U.S. Government in 1917. In 1976, the Oscar Anderson house (originally constructed in 1915) was donated to the Municipality and moved to its current location in the park, where it now operates as a museum.



Figure 2: The Oscar Anderson House Museum

Elderberry Park has evolved through the years. In 1980, the restroom building and central plaza was first constructed followed by the construction of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail in 1986. With the development of the Coastal Trail, the character of Elderberry Park changed. A significant portion of the park's western edge was regraded to a 3:1 slope to accommodate a tunnel under the railroad. Along with this construction a 10 foot wide path was built through the middle of park to provide access to the Coastal Trail.

In 2012, the Anchorage Park Foundation was awarded \$95,000 in state legislative grant funds for improvements to Elderberry Park. Anchorage Parks and Recreation worked with a committee comprised of local park users to identify and prioritize improvements at the park. Through this process, the committee identified several potential improvements to existing facilities. However, several issues such as poor circulation and signage, aging facilities, and conflicts between park and trail users remained unresolved. A key take-away from this process was that the park would benefit from additional planning and investment.



While the high number of park users is generally considered positive, the mix of casual neighborhood use and active trail use has led to some significant conflicts and safety concerns. In its current configuration, the walkway accessing the Coastal Trail divides the park and creates a high speed corridor through the center of the park. This creates a safety hazard and diminishes park users experience. Within the community, there has been a strong desire to remove high speed traffic from the park and return the space to more traditional park uses.

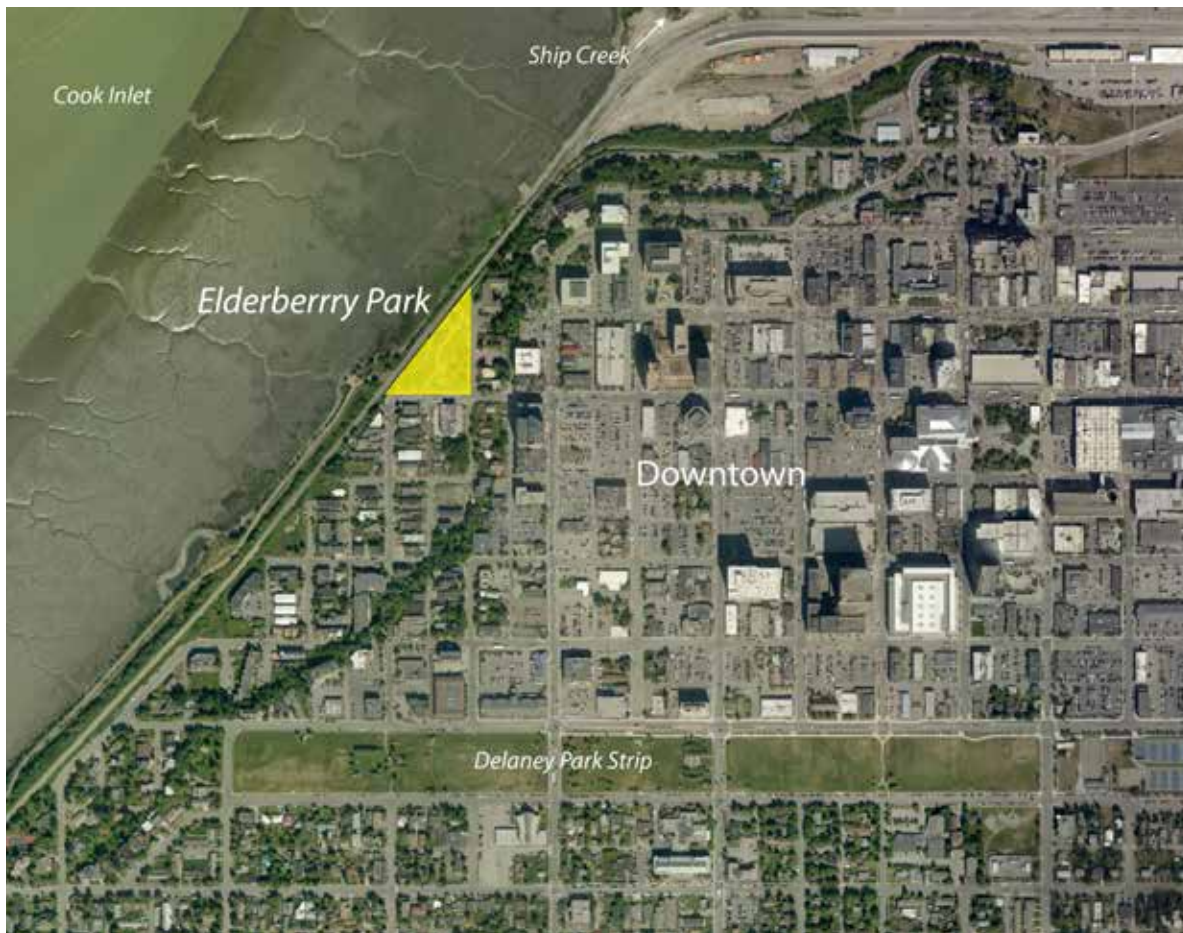


Figure 3: View of Cook Inlet from the park

## Purpose of the Plan

This master plan is intended to address issues and guide development of Elderberry Park over the next 20 years. More specifically, the purpose of this master plan is to:

- Improve circulation within the park to minimize conflicts between park and trail users
- Facilitate safe access to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail
- Improve the visibility and historic context of the Oscar Anderson House
- Provide a park that encourages positive uses and discourages undesirable activity
- Improve interpretive and wayfinding signage
- Provide amenities that meet the needs of a wide range of park users
- Create a tool for future fundraising

## Guiding Principles

The mission of the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department is to ensure that Anchorage parks are well maintained and safe for the public. This mission is embodied in the motto “Healthy Parks, Healthy People”. To fulfill this mission, Anchorage Parks and Recreation is guided by a set of eight strategies or core values. These strategies guide the Parks and Recreation Department in the management of Municipal parklands and were established in the Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan (2006).

## Core Values & Strategic Goals

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 & Facilities for a Diverse Community
6. Access and Connections
7. Stewardship of Natural Resources
8. Creating a Strong Parks and Recreation Organization

These eight strategies serve as the basis for future action and decision-making and are the product of a comprehensive and on-going public engagement process.

*Figure 4: View of the walkway entering the park from 5th Ave and M St*





## Chapter 2: Planning Process

*This chapter provides an overview of the planning and public involvement process used in the development of the Elderberry Park Master Plan.*

### Outreach

Public Involvement is an important component of any planning process. To ensure that the Elderberry Park Master Plan aligns with the desires of the community, a public involvement process was led by Anchorage Parks and Recreation and Earthscape.

In January 2015, the planning team began outreach with a presentation at the South Addition Community Council. The planning team also reached out to the Downtown Community Council as well and local businesses. Social media, such as Nextdoor, Facebook, and the Parks and Recreation website was also utilized to reach a broader audience.

### Public Involvement

The planning team facilitated a public input process that included three meetings with an advisory group and two public workshops.

#### Advisory Group

The planning team hosted three meetings with an advisory group. The primary role of the advisory group was to assist the planning team in reviewing public input and to develop recommendations to be included in the Master Plan. The advisory group consists of a wide range of interest including park neighbors, condo association board members, local business owners, Municipal Planning staff, historic preservation interest, as well as a representative from the Anchorage Downtown Partnership.



*Figure 5: Members of the community participating at the Planning Workshop in February*

#### Public Workshops

The planning team hosted two public workshops. The workshops were held in February and March with approximately 20 members of the community participating in each workshop. The workshops provided members of the public an opportunity to provide input and feedback that was used to inform the development of the Master Plan.

### Approval Process

Approval of the Davis Park Master Plan is a three-step process. The first step of the approval process is to present the plan for a Resolution of Support to the South Addition Community Council (10/15/15).

The approval process continues with two public hearings. The first public hearing will be the Parks and Recreation Commission (12/10/15). The second public hearing will be the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Once approved, implementation of the Elderberry Park Master Plan can begin as funds become available.

## Chapter 3: Existing Conditions

*This chapter describes the existing site features that characterize the park. The following pages includes a discussion of the physical site features and user groups active at the park. This section also includes an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints of developed facilities.*

### Context

Elderberry Park lies at the foot of a bluff that defines the western commercial edge of the Anchorage Central Business District and the northern edge of the residential neighborhood of Bootlegger Cove. Cook Inlet and Knik Arm are directly west of the site, separated from the park by the Alaska Railroad tracks and Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. The site is bounded on the south by 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and on the east by M Street. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue is lined by single and multi-family residences. M Street is lined by parking lots, single family homes, and the Elderberry Condominium complex.

The site is triangular in shape, with the southern (5<sup>th</sup> Avenue) side approximately 320 feet long and the eastern (M Street) side being 420 feet long. The Alaska Railroad tracks and Tony Knowles Coastal Trail cut diagonally from the southwest to the north on the western side of the site and roughly represent the western boundary. The northern 100 feet of the park are not dedicated parkland but the property, occupied by the Oscar Anderson House Museum, is owned by the Municipality of Anchorage. The Tony Knowles Coastal Trail lies partially within the park and partially on Alaska Railroad Corporation owned property. The trail crosses under the railroad tracks near the park's southwestern corner and provides trail access to approximately 11 miles of trail along the coast, with access to many other trails along its length. As such, Elderberry Park offers one of the few trail heads in the downtown area for the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail.

*Figure 6: Aerial image of Elderberry Park with park boundaries delineated*



## Physical Site Features

*The following is a list describes the physical features of Elderberry Park.*

### Geology & Soils

Elderberry Park lies in the lower portion of the remnants of slide activity from previous earthquakes. This provides a bench from which views to the west provide an overview of the Tordrillo Mountains, Cook Inlet, and Mt. Susitna. Surficial soils in the local area tend to be a mix of organics and silts that are typical of the coastal location in this part of Anchorage. The soils overlay deep layers of Bootlegger Cove Clay that have narrow pockets of sands and silts embedded within the clay, owing to ancient estuarine deposits. The Bootlegger Cove Clay is characterized by low stability when subjected to violent shaking and is known to have been the cause of much of the landsliding in the Anchorage area in the 1964 Great Alaska Earthquake. There was localized sliding in the 1964 earthquake in proximity to Elderberry Park under an area roughly comprising uplands west of K and L Streets (containing Elderberry Park), following an arc that meets at the western end of the Delaney Park Strip. The slide mass moved westward towards Cook Inlet as much as 14 feet and subsided as much as 10 feet. Generally, areas not directly affected by the separation of blocks of earth from the head of the slide fared well, including numbers of properties in proximity to Elderberry Park.

### Slope

The site is composed of two areas of slope, roughly divided by the central walk/trail that runs from north to south. Areas on the eastern side of the site tend to feature slopes of approximately 10% (1 foot drop every 10 feet) with a bench at the location of the central plaza/walkway. The site then slopes relatively steeply west of the central walk, at an approximate grade of 35% or 1 foot drop every 3 feet. This change is related to the cut-slope that was created when the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail under-crossing of the railroad tracks was constructed. That work required substantial cut to traverse under the tracks. There is a retaining wall that runs along much of the trail as it descends to the tunnel with height that varies from 2 feet to approximately 4 feet.



*Figure 7: View of the western slope from the parking lot*

### Drainage

Other than a drainage inlet at the entrance to the Alaska Railroad Crossing tunnel, drainage on site flows on the ground surface from east to west. Soils are relatively free-draining, limiting the amount of ponding after rain events. The western facing slopes allow relatively quick drainage of accumulated ice and snow at breakup, making the site relatively usable by the public early in the spring season.

### Vegetation

Vegetation consists of ornamental plantings that include a mix of birch and spruce trees for most areas. The site is generally open, offering views throughout the park, with the exception of relatively dense plantings in proximity to Oscar Anderson House. These plantings preclude views to the house from much of the park. Plantings also include a large pine tree that is out of context with the period of Oscar Anderson House construction since the pine is non-native and would not have been found in the area in 1914 or anytime near that time period.

A planting of Siberian pea provides a hedge between the playground and 5th Avenue. There are attractive



mountain ash trees near the playground that provide some color and berries. There are also some ornamental shrubs that are scattered at various locations, primarily near the 5th Avenue sidewalk and near the Oscar Anderson House. Elderberry plants are located near the park entrance at the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue/M Street intersection.

Vegetation is in generally good shape. Exceptions are two birch trees near the western end of the diagonal walk that connects from the 5th Avenue/M Street intersection to the central plaza. Those two trees appear stressed with large cracks at the base of the trees. One tree also leans markedly, possibly a reaction to previous construction activity, coupled with crowding by the adjacent tree.

## Utilities

### *Electrical*

Electrical service to the park is provided by ML&P from a utility pole located on 5th Avenue. Power is provided via a service drop from overhead lines to a transformer south of the utility building near the parking lot on 5th Avenue. The electrical service serves lighting and the utility building

### *Lighting*

Lighting is provided from wood pole street lights with cobra head fixtures along the north side of 5th Avenue. Lighting within the park is provided from metal poles and luminaries along the main central walk/trail, and from metal poles and luminaries along the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. Most of the luminaries are in working condition though many of the luminary poles are leaning. There is no street lighting on M Street.

### *Sewer and Water*

A wastewater line is located in the M Street right-of-way. Water service is available in both M Street and 5th Avenue. An existing structure on the site previously served as a restroom thus water and sewer service was available. Water service is still available within the building.

### *Fuel Pipeline*

Construction plans for the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail indicate that a 10-inch Tesoro pipeline is located under the western tunnel entrance. According to plan drawings the line is approximately 7 feet below the tunnel trail surface.

## User Groups

*The following is a list of user groups who visit the park. Each description is a generalization of a “use” found in the park. Individual users may be part of several of the identified “user groups”.*

### Neighborhood Residents

In a neighborhood of higher density housing, Elderberry Park provides valuable green space for recreation. Neighborhood residents use the park to play in the playground, enjoy the views, and access the Coastal Trail. The park also provides an opportunity for neighborhood children to comb the shoreline, hoot and holler in the tunnel, wave at trains, visit the Hannah Cove overlook, and view ships, wildlife, and people along the trail. This group uses the park on a daily or weekly basis.

### Trail Users

Trail users begin and end many trips at Elderberry Park. Many are locals while many are visitors to Anchorage. According to trail counts in 2014, the Elderberry trail head served 162,899 pedestrians and 87,339 cyclists between January 1 and December 24, 2014 (Eco-Counter, 2014). Saturday is the busiest day of the week, with June and July being the busiest months. The Municipality of Anchorage and the Alaska Railroad Corporation are actively discussing connecting the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail with Ship Creek. This may increase the numbers of trail users who would consider beginning their trips at Elderberry Park since there would be more traveling and viewing options. This group uses the park on a daily basis.



Figure 8: Playground at Elderberry Park and downtown Anchorage (photo credit: Alaska.org)

### Passive Users

Passive users include residents and local employees who visit the park to simply sit and enjoy the views. Passive use is highest on sunny days. While some seating is available on benches or at picnic tables, many park users simply sit on the sloping lawn. This group also includes employees of downtown businesses who visit the park during their lunch hour. Families also visit the park after work or on weekends for picnicking and recreation.

### Tourists/Visitors

Elderberry Park is popular among tourists staying or visiting the downtown area. The park offers unobstructed views of the Cook Inlet and is within easy walking distance of area hotels, bed & breakfasts, and restaurants. Additionally, tourists and visitors who rent bicycles are often directed to Elderberry Park as a point of access to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail.

### Historic Interests

The Oscar Anderson House Museum provides a unique look at Anchorage’s historic past. Visitors enjoy the architecture and intimate interior spaces that suggest how Anchorage’s pioneers once lived. An interpretive kiosk near the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail provides visitors with additional history and context to the house. The basement of the Oscar Anderson House also serves as the headquarters for the Alaska

Association for Historic Preservation. Visitation is generally on a daily basis, more often when the Oscar Anderson House Museum is open. Museum hours are advertised as summer only, Tuesdays through Sundays from noon until 4pm.

## Performance Uses

Elderberry Park offers a nice backdrop for art and performance art. In January 2015, Elderberry Park was the site of an installation by the artist's group "Light Brigade." The installation garnered interest from the press and the general public. The Light Brigade used a collection of art pieces installed both in the park and in the tunnel to inspire visitors with light and sound.



Figure 9: The Light Brigade art installation at Elderberry Park in December 2014

## Dog Walkers

Dog walkers are usually neighbors who use Elderberry Park as a destination to walk dogs or to embark on the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. Thus it is a subset of both "neighborhood families" and "trail users". Dog walkers typically (though not always) carry "waste bags" for cleanup and often use Elderberry Park as part of a loop to Westchester Lagoon or downtown. Dog walkers are daily users.

## Nuisance Activity

"Nuisance Activity" includes activity that is not in concert with the intended use of the parkland. Anchorage Police Department reports for the park indicate 12 reports in 2014, 10 in 2013, 17 in 2012, 10 in 2011, and 12 in 2010. The chart below groups the reported police calls by category. "Miscellaneous" includes graffiti, parole violations, warrant arrests, found property, agency assistance, medical calls, and missing persons.

Table 1 Police Reports, Years 2010-2014

Year	Disturbance	Liquor	Drug	Theft/Robbery	Assault/Rape	Miscellaneous
2014	2	2	1	2	2	3
2013	2	1	1	2	3	1
2012	1	1	1	1	2	11
2011	3	2	0	1	1	3
2010	0	0	0	4	1	7



## Developed Facilities: SWOT Analysis

*The following section describes the existing facilities within the park and includes a discussion of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of each of those uses.*



Figure 10: Illustration of developed facilities at Elderberry Park

## Parking Area

A parking lot located on 5th Avenue provides spaces for 12 vehicles. There is no charge for parking and parking is limited to two hours. The parking area is used both by park users and by visitors to downtown in need of a parking space for a short period of time. Handicap spaces are not striped and signed and curb cuts are available only on the corners of the curb returns at the east and west ends of the parking lot. The parking lot is located on parkland and not within the 5th Avenue right-of-way. There are also approximately 11 curbside parking spaces available along the M Street right-of-way. As with the 5th Avenue parking, this parking is signed for two hour parking.

**Strengths:** The available parking provides for the “community” nature of the park. Given that the park functions as one of the limited trailheads to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, it also provides parking for trail users.

**Weaknesses:** The 5th Avenue parking lot could be much larger and still there would be a demand for more parking. Conversely, the presence of a parking lot at all detracts from the “neighborhood” character of the park, transforming it to a broader “community” use.

**Opportunities:** Requiring payment for parking could discourage non-park related parking in the lot. Paid parking could also generate revenue for Municipal purposes.

**Threats:** While the 5th Avenue parking lot is intended for use by park users, it is often used for short term parking by visitors to downtown who are avoiding paying for parking. Thus, the parking lot is serving a purpose other than its intended use.



Figure 11: Existing parking lot on 5th Avenue



Figure 12: View of Elderberry Park and parking looking NW

## Playground

A small neighborhood playground is located on the south side of the park near 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The playground is tiered and includes two small structures and swing set. The playground does not fully meet current national guidelines for ADA accessibility and fall surfacing. One exception is the accessible play surfacing provided to the northernmost piece of play equipment. That surface was installed to provide both accessible surfacing while meeting fall requirements.

Playground pieces include:

- Swing with 2 tot seats, 2 belt seats
- 2-5 year Tot-lot play equipment
- 5-12 year play structure with slide
- Ribbon-style bike rack
- Picnic tables

**Strengths:** With few neighborhood parks within the immediate area, the playground at Elderberry Park provides an important amenity to neighborhood families. The nearest alternative playgrounds are approximately ½ mile away at Pioneer Park or Inlet View Elementary School. Some play equipment is available at Nulbay Park, approximately ¼ mile to the south.



Figure 13: Existing playground equipment

**Weaknesses:** The play area is located behind a hedge row and is not easily visible from the street. The equipment is aging and the play surfacing does not meet current playground safety requirements. Further, the changes in elevation do not provide for a fully accessible playground.

**Opportunities:** The play area is important for maintaining the “neighborhood” function of the park. It also provides one of the few “tot lots” in the community, addressing the needs of younger children.

**Threats:** At some point the playground will require upgrading. Replacing the play equipment will be expensive and at a time of decreasing revenues and a focus on other park funding priorities, it may be difficult to find adequate funding for replacement.



Figure 14 Dated fall surfacing and overflowing pea gravel



## Open Areas

Open areas provide relatively level picnic grounds in the eastern and northern portions of the park. The areas west of the main 10 foot walkway are relatively steep, sloping towards the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail and its underpass of the ARRC tracks. Most of the trees in the park are mature and in good shape. However, several trees near the lower end of the diagonal path that leads from the 5th Avenue/M Street intersection are stressed.

**Strengths:** The open areas provide outstanding views and a natural surface upon which to sit and enjoy the scenery. Level area is available for picnicking in the eastern portion of the open lawn.

**Weaknesses:** While there is some space available for picnicking, the demand for places to picnic is high and the available level terrain is limited. The sloped area west of the main trail is too steeply sloping for anything other than sitting on the grass and enjoying the view. Children can enjoy running up and down the sloping areas but risk crashing into the fence above the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. The fence is currently in need of repair at its southern end.

**Opportunities:** The open areas and slopes provide opportunities for picnicking, viewing the scenery, and unstructured play. If developed properly, sloped areas could provide new intimate spaces to enjoy a sunset or picnic.

**Threats:** The eastern area tends to get overused for viewing and picnicking, especially near the central plaza. Trees at the southern end of the diagonal entry walk may be in a deteriorating state because of past construction and/or compaction caused by cyclists trying to access the Coastal Trail. The western side of the area, at the low end of the slope, may pose a safety problem at some point should the fence fall in disrepair, a condition that exists at its southern end. The increasing numbers of visitors to the site may detract from the overall park experience at some point and may produce further degradation of turfed surfaces.



Figure 15: Open space in Elderberry Park

## Walkways

There are several walks and trails within the park. There are 5-foot wide sidewalks on both 5th Avenue and M Street, on the southern and eastern boundaries of the park. A 5-foot wide diagonal concrete walk extends from the 5th Avenue/M Street intersection northwest to the central plaza and is marked with a park entry sign. This walk does not comply with current accessibility codes, having slopes that exceed ADA requirements of less than a 5% gradient for an accessible route. Further, this walkway has steps that would preclude wheelchair use.

Further to the north, a second 5-foot wide diagonal walk extends from M Street heading southwest to connect to the central plaza. The grades of this walkway comply with accessibility criteria. A curb cut is provided on M Street to facilitate wheelchair access though no “handicap” parking spaces are provided on the street.

There is a sidewalk that connects from M Street to the Oscar Anderson House Museum and provides access from the home entry, down steps, to the central park walkway. It also provides a connection to the north side of Oscar Anderson House where the Alaska Association for Historic Preservation is housed. This walkway generally has acceptable grades but has cross slopes that would be challenging for wheelchair travel. The steps have handrails but the handrails do not strictly comply with ADA accessibility criteria.

A 10-foot wide walkway runs north-south connecting the parking lot to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. This walkway also connects to the playground area and passes by the park’s small central plaza. The trail generally meets accessibility criteria with the exception of a 65-foot long stretch just north of the central plaza. This section of trail exceeds the 5% ADA grade limitations and has a slope of approximately 6.5% without landings.

Curb cuts are provided in three locations: 1) the southern parking lot, 2) the M Street/5<sup>th</sup> Ave diagonal walk that connects to the plaza, and 3) the Oscar Anderson House Museum.



Figure 16: Diagonal walk from 5th/M intersection to central plaza



Figure 17: Main walkway and access to Coastal Trail

**Strengths:** The walkways provide for most pedestrian needs within the park. The paved network generally protects vegetated areas from degradation and the walks are placed in locations that have prevented most short-circuiting and social trails.

**Weaknesses:** Elderberry Park, in its current configuration, is now 30 years old and the walkways are in various stages of degradation. The central walkway has been repaired but other walkways have fallen into disrepair. There is not a fully “accessible route” through the park that provides access to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, as grades or steps preclude meeting ADA accessibility requirements.

Wayfinding from the street to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail is generally poor. Many cyclists use the diagonal trail from the 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. and M Street intersection and must go around the steps at the bottom of that trail. This creates a dirt trail on the sides of the steps and brings fast moving cyclist through the main plaza creating conflicts between cyclist and park users.

**Opportunities:** The varied topography is challenging but provides opportunities to use terrain to create interesting trail layouts while accommodating user needs. Also, the length of the park relative to key locations allows enough distance to achieve accessible routes should the park be redeveloped.

This park is one of the few trailheads for the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail in the downtown area and has the potential to generate high local and visitor use numbers. There should be a suitable location for the trailhead to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail that provides a direct and easily-found beginning that does not infringe on other uses within the park.

**Threats:** The current configuration of walkways within the park leads to conflicts between park users and those connecting directly to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. Maintaining these existing patterns as is may result in accidents in the future.

## Central Plaza

The central plaza was originally the focal point of the park and was the primary viewing location for park users. It featured benches, wood retaining walls, and a wood platform; all of which have deteriorated and have been removed.

At present, the plaza is a worn piece of concrete that serves little purpose other than providing a central location for people could gather. Benches along the main trail provide seating opportunities which are no longer made available in the plaza.

**Strengths:** The plaza is a central gathering place and a delivery point for the two diagonal walks that enter the park. It is level whereas much of the park is rolling or sloped. People can sit in the plaza and not be in the path of travel. All other benches are directly adjacent to the trail where users have little privacy and views are interrupted by pedestrians.

**Weaknesses:** The plaza lacks amenities or any definition as to its intended purpose. While it previously provided seating, that no longer exists. The plaza seems to be a focal point without a function.

**Opportunities:** The plaza is at the center of the park and has the potential to be a focal point of the park. It provides an outstanding location for amenities such as viewing scopes, seating, and interpretive material.

**Threats:** If not carefully organized, the plaza could turn into the focus of a confusion of tourists looking for views, parents watching children at the playground, and a constant parade of cyclists and walkers trying to get to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail.



Figure 18: Central plaza



Figure 19: Central plaza



## Amenities

Elderberry Park is home a range of amenities which enrich park user's experience. These amenities include the following:

- Entry signage to Elderberry Park
- A utility building that previously was a restroom
- Seating along the main access trail
- Planet Mars—interpretive material as part of the Light Speed Planet Walk
- Oscar Anderson House interpretive kiosks
- A whale play piece at the north end of the park
- Landscaping and flower beds
- Movable picnic tables
- Park benches and trash receptacles



Figure 20: Amenities at Elderberry Park

**Strengths:** A range of amenities are fundamental to providing a functioning park. The picnic tables and benches are well-used and enrich the park experience. The whale piece is a “nice find” by people as they travel within the park. The Oscar Anderson House interpretive material includes historic information about the house and entices people to investigate further.

**Weaknesses:** Amenities such as wayfinding, park benches, and interpretive information are unorganized and scattered throughout the park and do not fully meet the needs of park users. The Planet Mars kiosk, part of the Light Speed Planet Walk, is often missed since it is not on a main walkway. The Anchorage trail system map causes congestion along the Coastal Trail. Benches along the interior park walkways are directly adjacent to the walks and offer only limited separation of trail users and those seated on the benches. Picnic tables have no sense of permanence and appear scattered as opposed to logically placed. The whale structure seems unassociated with other park features.

**Opportunities:** While relatively inexpensive, new and/or improved amenities have the potential to greatly improve park user's experience. The park entry sign should be located at a fully accessible entry point or a second sign should provide some direction to users. Also, the Planet Mars of the Light Speed Planet Walk should be located at or near the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail such that it is consistent with the other planet kiosks, situated along the walking route. Additional interpretive material should be added to provide context and highlight the spectacular scenery. A viewing scope could be an appropriate amenity. A trail map of Anchorage should be located at the trailhead of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail and be separated from other park uses. Seating should be located to capitalize on the views and separated from high speed trail corridors.

**Threats:** Failure to plan for and upgrade amenities will further continue the pattern of unorganized use.

## Chapter 4: The Master Plan

*This chapter provides the master plan recommendations. The following pages provide a discussion of the park identity and needs as identified by the public through the planning process. This section also includes a description of the 5 options presented at the planning workshops and the refinement of those options into a preferred alternative.*

### Park Identity

Community input is valuable in determining the needs and identity of a park. Members of the public involved in the planning process provided a sense of the public's use of the park as well as its needs and deficiencies.

Participants at the public open house events shared their knowledge and personal experiences in an effort to develop a "park identity". Collectively, participants acknowledged the park as a neighborhood park, a trailhead for the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, a place to enjoy the view, and a home to an important historic landmark. The following three phrases from the public workshop capture the public's view of the identity of the park:

*"A pedestrian friendly park and a place where Oscar Anderson House would shine"*

*"It's the view"*

*"A tourist friendly neighborhood park"*

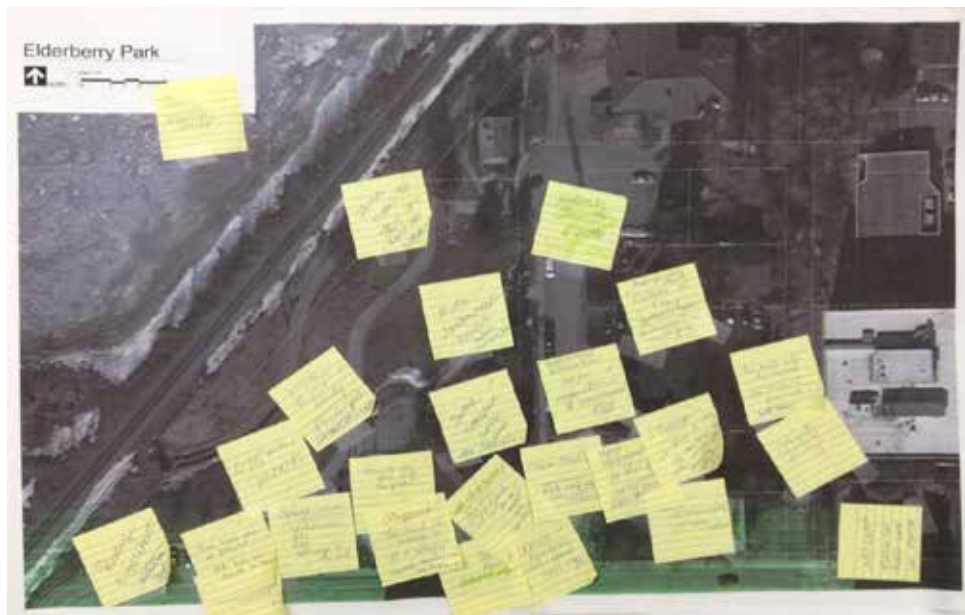


Figure 21: Input from public at first public meeting

## Park Needs

Recognizing the expressed identities, it was also clear that there were a number of “needs” that should be addressed through the master plan process. These identified “park needs” are broken down into four categories: 1) Use and Services, 2) Circulation and Access, 3) Safety, and 4) Maintenance/Management.

### Use and Services

In general, park use could benefit from separating uses and providing better wayfinding signage. Members of the public provided the following specific comments:

- Provide better signage
- Create more areas to enjoy views
- Enlarge play area
- Provide larger, more readable trail signs
- Separate viewpoints from the trail
- Save trees along M Street

### Circulation and Access

Participants at the open house events felt that trail traffic should be separated from other park uses. Specifically, the public suggested the following:

- Make the park usable by the disabled
- Remove the northernmost diagonal sidewalk that connects M Street to the plaza
- Add more parking
- Make a wider sidewalk from the park entry
- Remove any through-park trail

### Safety

As with other issues, safety concerns were primarily directed at separation of traffic within the park. More specific comments included the following:

- Improve the trail intersection at the coastal trail
- Address safety issues of bikes, skateboarders, pets, children
- Improve uneven walking surfaces
- Provide better signage (“children at play,” “caution”)
- Replace play equipment

### Maintenance/Management

Members of the public were concerned about how the park was managed, particularly with respect to amenity aspects of the park. Specific comments included the following:

- Enforce parking at 5th Avenue
- Improve park cleanliness
- Confirm “landmark” status of Oscar Anderson plot
- Add trash cans close to parking
- Get rid of toilet building



## Conceptual Alternatives

Five options were developed based on input gathered at the first public workshop. The options ranged from relatively modest changes to more aggressive modifications to the park. The following section summarizes the five options presented at the second public meeting.

### Option I

The intent of the first option was “Maintain Existing and Separate Trail Connection.” This option keeps both the parking lot and the Oscar Anderson House in their present location. The option includes site alterations to provide a setting more appropriate to the home’s historical value. The restroom is maintained and improved, or could be removed and port-a-potties placed in lieu of the restroom, behind an attractive screening structure.

The option provides fully internal circulation with relocation of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail access to the northern end of M Street. A sidewalk from the intersection of 5th Avenue and M Street originates from an entry plaza and directs pedestrians to an overlook featuring an art piece and a generous area for viewing the landscape. A paved area provides sitting and circulation for a play area located generally where the existing play area is located, and a sidewalk connects to the existing parking lot. An internal trail connects from the paved area/plaza to Oscar Anderson House.



Figure 22: Option 1 Concept Alternative

## Option 2

The second option is intended to, “Reinforce Existing Positive Attributes.” That option addresses the existing parking lot and Oscar Anderson House similar to Option 1, maintaining them in their current location and improving the Oscar Anderson House setting and access. Also, the restroom facility is either improved or a port-a-potty behind a screened structure is proposed in the same location.



Access to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail is maintained at its current location, but a dedicated trail, separated from neighborhood park activity areas, provides direct access from the 5th Avenue/M Street intersection to the trailhead.

The play area is expanded with specific spaces provided for toddlers and school age children, with a dedicated area for a larger swing set. A generous plaza is provided near the playground but it does not specifically address viewing opportunities. A 5-foot wide internal path provides seating and access to the green sloping areas within the park and connects to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail path, but by its location and width, discourages bike traffic.

Figure 23: Option 2 Concept Alternative

### Option 3

The third option is intended to, “Separate Traffic Streams and Use Areas.” It maintains the parking in its current configuration. The Oscar Anderson House grounds are expanded to provide an opportunity for gatherings such as non-profit event fundraisers or weddings, possibly providing an income source for Alaska Association of Historic Preservation. Gardens are also provided to create a more appropriate “period setting” for the home.

Access to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail is provided from the 5th Avenue/M Street intersection to the northern end of M Street via a 10-foot to 12-foot wide pathway at the back of curb. All other circulation is internal to the park with no connection to the existing Tony Knowles Coastal Trail trailhead.

The playground is expanded, roughly at its present location, but stepping eastward, up the hill. Sidewalks within the park expand to plazas near the western edge of the playground and extensive seating is provided for both landscape viewers and neighborhood park/playground users. The restrooms are maintained at their current location and are either improved or porta-potties provided.



Figure 24: Option 3 Concept Alternative



## Option 4

Option 4 is intended to, “Reinforce the Positive and Remove Traffic Conflicts.” That option removes the existing parking at the southern property edge and instead provides head-in parking on the western side of M Street. Oscar Anderson House is maintained in its current location with modest improvements to provide a more period-appropriate setting and a modified entry.



Tony Knowles Coastal Trail access is provided via a switchback trail that begins at the new parking lot and connects to the existing trailhead. An internal circulation pathway allows connection to the southern end of the park, passing by a small, tiered sitting/amphitheater area that is geared to viewing the landscape or listening to impromptu music offerings.

The primary “neighborhood park” access is from the 5th Avenue/M Street intersection, featuring a walkway directly against the northern edge of an expanded playground. The sidewalk terminates in a plaza that provides benches for both watching playground activity and viewing the landscape.

Figure 25: Option 4 Concept Alternative

## Option 5

Option 5 is intended to “Separate Users with Oscar Anderson House as a Focal Point.” It provides for a switch of the locations of Oscar Anderson House and the playground. The playground is proposed to be located at the northern end of the park, proximate to a new entry to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, at the northern end of M Street.

Oscar Anderson House is shown as being adjacent to the existing parking lot, providing more of a “neighborhood setting” for the home. An ample area is provided for decks and gardens that would suggest a period-specific setting. The plan proposes gardens and walkways adjacent to 5th Avenue while providing a deck at the rear of the structure that might lend itself to small fundraising events or perhaps weddings, given the spectacular view that is available.



Figure 26: Option 5 Concept Alternative

## Conformance of Options with Criteria

After the second public meeting, the planning team provided a cursory analysis of the “fit” of the five options with the evaluation criteria. The options were evaluated with a plus (+), neutral (0), or minus (-) rating. Following is a table showing conformance of the options with the criteria that the public identified as being of the most concern.

	Options				
	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Use and services</b>					
Better signage: park entry and Oscar Anderson House	+	+	+	+	+
Create more areas to enjoy views	+	+	+	+	-
Enlarge play area	0	+	+	+	+
Larger more readable trail signs	+	+	+	+	+
Keep viewing areas off of trail	+	+	+	+	-
Preserve trees along M Street	+	+	-	-	+
<b>Circulation and access</b>					
Make park usable for disabled	+	+	+	+	+
Remove diagonal sidewalk from M St. into plaza	+	+	+	+	+
Add more parking	-	-	-	+	-
Make wider sidewalk from park entry	+	-	-	+	-
Remove through-park trail	+	-	+	+	+
<b>Safety</b>					
Improve trail intersection at coastal trail	+	+	+	+	+
Address safety issues of bikes, skateboarders, pets, children	+	+	+	+	+
Improve uneven walking surfaces	+	+	+	+	+
Better signage (“children at play,” “caution”)	+	+	+	+	+
Replace play equipment	+	+	+	+	+
<b>Maintenance and Management</b>					
Enforce parking at 5th Avenue	0	0	0	0	0
Improve park cleanliness	+	+	+	+	+
Confirm “landmark” status of Oscar Anderson plot	+	+	+	+	+
Add trash cans close to parking	+	+	+	+	+
Get rid of the toilet building	-	+	+	+	+

Table 27: Conformance of concept alternatives to public input criteria



## Preferred Alternative

The following section describes the elements included in the preferred alternative. Each element includes recommendations which are based on input gathered through the public process and review by an advisory group.

# ELDERBERRY PARK

ANCHORAGE, AK



Figure 28: The Preferred Alternative Master Plan

## Playground

The playground should be upgraded and expanded slightly to provide added play value, improved ADA accessibility, and updated “fall” surfacing materials. The playground should remain intimate, providing primarily for neighborhood needs, not community-wide needs.

## Viewing Areas

### *Terraced Seating Area*

A terraced seating area is located directly west of the central plaza and playground. The seating area utilizes the steep western slope to create a series of grassy seating areas. Tiers should be retained by walls no more than 30 inches in height.

The terraced seating area should provide for excellent viewing opportunities as well as small intimate or impromptu “performances” by park visitors. The terraces would be easily visible from above and from 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue as well as the Coastal Trail which should limit the occurrence of undesirable behavior.

### *Overlook*

A dedicated overlook located in the central portion of the park provides a focal point for park visitors. The overlook should include amenities that enrich park users experience such as interpretive panels, seating, art displays, and telescopes.

The overlook should be located such that it offers unimpeded views of the inlet and mountains beyond. It should have information that identifies landmarks in the view as well as the key features of the park. It should also provide orientation to the Oscar Anderson House so that visitors are aware of the nearby location of the museum. The overlook also provides a good location for a temporary or permanent art display. Any permanent art displayed within the park should be appropriate, context sensitive and reflect the identity of the park.

## Open Space

The large open grassy area between the overlook and the Oscar Anderson House Museum should remain open for passive recreation and picnicking. The open space should maintain the existing shape, grade and vegetation; and should be free of plants, other than lawn and existing trees. Additional amenities such as picnic tables and park benches should be thoughtfully placed as not to obstruct movement.

## Tony Knowles Coastal Trail Connection

Access to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail should be re-routed to the north away from the central portion of the park. Moving the access trail would remove fast moving cyclist from the busy areas of the park; thereby, reducing conflicts and restoring the character of the park.

Throughout this planning process, considerable discussion has been devoted to the resolution of the connection from downtown to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. Most individuals see the need to re-locate the Coastal Trail access away from more traditional park uses. Many favored a connection that would have been located near the Oscar Anderson House and would connect to the existing trailhead via a serpentine trail within the park. However, such a connection devotes a significant amount of park open space to trail use. Many members of the public, and a consensus of the advisory group, preferred a connection at the northern end of M Street. While this alternative provides a logical connection to the Coastal Trail, it will require extensive coordination as well as resolution of right-of-way and property issues, and may not prove viable in the end.

Two alternatives for accessing the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail are presented below. Preferred Alternative 1 is the preferred route and provides access to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail via the end of M Street. Alternative 2 provides access to the Coastal Trail via an “S” shaped trail within the park.

## Preferred Alternative I: Coastal Trail Access at M Street

Access to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail is removed from the park and re-located to the north end of M Street. To accommodate trail users, the sidewalk along the west side of M Street should be widened to approximately 10 feet. This may require the removal of approximately 4-5 curbside parking spaces at the eastern end of the park boundary. “Sharrows” can also be added along M Street to further accommodate bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

M Street access is preferable for the following reasons:

- It completely eliminates conflicts associated with trail access and internal park use.
- It provides better sight distance of oncoming traffic for trail users.
- The reduction in conflicts and improvement of sight distance should increase safety for both park and trail users.
- It preserves more of the park for park use instead of circulation use.
- The trail would bring more people by the Oscar Anderson House Museum, improving its visibility to the public and possibly increasing visitation to the museum.

While M Street access is preferable, this option will require coordination among multiple parties and various stakeholders to resolve issues of access, ADA accessibility, and right-of way. To accomplish this, several issues will need to be resolved. These issues include:

- The Tony Knowles Coastal Trail is located within the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) right-of-way at this location. Permission is required from the ARRC to make this connection.
- The intersection of the new sidewalk with the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail may require raising the elevation of the trail 2-3 feet to provide for an ADA “accessible” trail.
- Removal of parking spaces will require discussion with Anchorage Economic Development Authority which oversees parking downtown.
- M Street could require re-construction to accommodate the proposed trail connection which could be expensive and difficult to achieve.



*Figure 29: Termination of M Street at the Coastal Trail*



## Alternative 2: Coastal Trail Access within Elderberry Park

Alternative 2 provides access to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail via an “S” shaped trail within the park. This option accomplishes the goal of separating trail and park uses but requires more space within the park to accommodate the trail.

It may be necessary to re-evaluate the Preferred Alternative 1 if the M Street access proves to be unobtainable. Thus, it is appropriate to recognize that a second alternative internal access trail with connection to the existing trailhead may be necessary. This trail would be located away from the playground and plaza, further down M Street, and would wind down through the park between the lawn and Oscar Anderson House.

A reconfigured access trail within Elderberry Park offers numerous benefits including:

- It separates high speed bicycle traffic from the other park uses.
- The trail would utilize the existing Coastal Trail access point.
- The winding trail would separate and better define the space occupied by the Oscar Anderson House Museum.
- The trail would bring more people by the Oscar Anderson House Museum, improving its visibility to the public and possibly increasing visitation to the museum.

While this option is more straight-forward than the M Street connection, the access trail will likely have a large footprint within the park and would take up valuable open space. This is because of the existing grades on site and the ADA requirements necessary to accommodate grading requirements.

## ELDERBERRY PARK

ANCHORAGE, AK  
ALTERNATIVE 2



Figure 30: Alternative 2 showing access to the Coastal Trail inside the Park

## Oscar Anderson House Museum

The Oscar Anderson House Museum is a key feature of Elderberry Park and provides an important glimpse into Anchorage's past. Efforts should be made to improve the house's visibility, provide more historical context, and give the house a more prominent place within the park. The plan proposes the following improvements:

- Safe, maintained summer/winter access to the front of the house.
- Safe ADA access to the basement at the back of the house
- Reconfigured gardens that are indicative of the time period of habitation of the Oscar Anderson House.
- Improve signage and wayfinding to direct visitors to the Museum House.
- Update interpretive information and kiosks
- Continue to monitor and address any issues of drainage in the area to ensure the long-term sustainability of the house
- A gathering area near or at the house as a possible location where small events and fundraisers could be held. Anything appended directly to the house could compromise the historical status of the building and should be avoided.

## Walkways

Walkways should be re-configured to facilitate ease of movement and minimize bicycle/pedestrian conflicts. The 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue/M Street intersection will remain as the primary entry point for pedestrians traveling from downtown. From this entrance, a 6-8 foot wide pathway should connect directly to the main plaza and overlook. This main walkway will likely require a short series of steps to accommodate existing grades.

ADA access should be provided from the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue/ M Street entrance to the park via a meandering trail connecting to the playground plaza with all slopes less than 5%. The meandering trail could travel through a small botanical garden, featuring indigenous plant materials and providing additional points of interest to visitors.

A second 6-10 foot walkway will connect the parking lot on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the overlook, plaza and playground. Additional pathways should be developed to connect the main plaza and overlook to the terraced seating area.

# Chapter 5: Implementation

*The following section provides supporting information for the implementation of the Elderberry Park master plan. This section includes costs estimates and a list of potential funding sources. Also included in this section is a discussion of the coordination and approval necessary to fully implement the master plan.*

## Cost Estimates

The Elderberry Park Master Plan provides a framework for development of the park over the next 20 years. Implementation of the plan should be phased over the life of the plan with priorities being refined through additional planning at the site plan level. Some improvements identified in this master plan, such as the Oscar Anderson House Museum, may lie completely outside of the typical park project funding stream.

Funding for implementation is expected to be a combination of public and private monies and possibly the contributions from philanthropic interests and volunteers. Estimated project costs total \$2 million in 2015 dollars. The following is a summary of cost estimates:

*Table 31: Cost Estimates for proposed development*

Terraced Seating Area	\$275,000
Overlook, Plaza and Walkways	\$825,000
Playground	\$325,000
Coastal Trail Connection	\$450,000
Site Development	\$100,000
Oscar Anderson House Upgrades	\$50,000
 Total	 \$2,025,000

It should be recognized that the estimate above reflects standard design and purchasing methods. It is possible to use a variety of non-standard mechanisms to reduce some overhead costs; however, for budgeting purposes, \$2 million is a reasonable estimate of probable costs.

## Funding Sources

Funding for park improvement projects typically come from a variety of sources. The following section provides a discussion of the various funding sources available.

### Parks Bonds

Parks bonds have historically been the manner in which park improvement projects have been funded. The MOA Department of Parks and Recreation has found that the voter resistance to approving parks bonds has generally been in the \$2 million arena. However, the Parks Department has found that the typical bond package needs to be spread over a variety of project locations and project types in order to attract positive votes. It may be possible to have one of the bonds in the near future targeted at Elderberry Park construction, but it is unlikely that more than \$500,000 could be pursued for a single park in a parks bond package.

### State Grants

In recent years, State Legislative Grants have been an effective way of funding park improvement projects. Park improvement projects are greatly appreciated by the public and legislators are usually favorable to



funding park improvements when discretionary monies are available to the legislature. However, the likelihood of gaining park funding is greatly diminished when funds are tight, as they are at the time of this planning. That constriction to funding is expected to continue into the foreseeable future, thus the hope of garnering a State of Alaska Legislative Grant is low for the near-term.

### **Anchorage Park Foundation**

The Anchorage Park Foundation (APF) has been successful at leveraging monies with Parks bonds and state grants in order to gain funding of parks projects. APF has also been adept at identifying non-profit/philanthropic interests for funding of specific portions of projects. Thus, the Anchorage Park Foundation could play a significant role in identifying possible funding sources and philanthropic organizations; and leveraging those contributions with Municipal Park Bonds and State Grants. The foundation is also adept at garnering in-kind contributions for design and construction.

### **Philanthropic Interests**

Philanthropic interests provide another potential source of funding for park improvements. Organizations such as the Rasmuson Foundation, have worked closely with the Anchorage Park Foundation to invest millions of dollars into improving Anchorage Parks. Local business and major corporations have also contributed to park improvement projects over the years and provide another avenue for funding.

### **Road Bonds**

Most of the proposed M Street trail improvements are proposed to be located within the M Street right-of-way. M Street is in need of an overall improvement project, particularly in light of a need for sidewalk on the eastern side of the street that would help deliver those using parking areas along the road to gain access to downtown without walking in the street or in the gravel. The proposed 10-foot wide trail could be included as part of an overall project. Because the project would be located in Municipal right-of-way, it would be eligible for road bond funding. Road bonds typically include numerous projects and the M Street project could be included as a portion of the overall bond. The cost shown in the estimate within this report includes only the work for the trail, with inclusion of new curb. It does not include full road improvements, or construction of sidewalk on the eastern side of the street.

## **Coordination and Approval**

Implementation of the master plan will require coordination and approval from a number of parties. A short description of the party and issue requiring coordination is below.

### **Alaska Railroad Corporation**

Much of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail adjacent to the park lies within Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) land. The proposed new connection at the northern end of M Street will require both agreement and a permit from the ARRC. They will want to see plans and will need a full understanding of what is being proposed at that location. ARRC will likely have concerns about safety and security that must be addressed. Should the proposed plan to relocate the Coastal Trail access to the end of M Street meet resistance from the ARRC or should the ARRC suggest conditions that the Municipality of Anchorage cannot comply with, Alternative 2 should be considered.

Another issue of some importance to the park is the preservation of views to Cook Inlet and the surrounding mountains. Cottonwood trees are rapidly growing along the railroad tracks, particularly on the western side of the tracks. While those trees are currently minor elements, they will quickly grow and at a point within the next ten years will begin compromising the view. The Municipality should work with ARRC to allow reasonable clearing of those cottonwood trees in order to preserve the views from Elderberry Park.

### **Municipality of Anchorage Public Works**

All work within the Municipal right-of-way will require agreement from Public Works. They will need to oversee any proposed trail improvements and associated street improvements if they occur in the right-

of-way. Also, the full project will need to comply with water quality requirements as well as any issues identified by the Traffic division.

During the planning process, planners coordinated with the Traffic Division to determine whether the proposed M Street connection was appropriate. The division indicated that they were generally favorable to such a consideration but were concerned that it would be cost prohibitive. The division also indicated a concern for grades at the location of the intersection, as well as a concern for conflict of the trail with the entrance to the Oscar Anderson House Museum entrance. After coordination, the division was satisfied with the solution but did recommend that the Alternative 2 be re-considered if the northern M Street connection proved problematic. The Traffic Division was particularly interested in seeing a full-width road improvement that would also increase pedestrian safety on the eastern side of M Street.

### **Anchorage Community Development Authority**

Anchorage Community Development Authority (ACDA) oversees parking within the Anchorage Central Business District. The provision of a 10 foot wide walkway on the western side of M Street could require removal of some parking that currently exists along the roadway. Removal of that parking must be coordinated with ACDA.

The parking lot on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue is often used by individuals who are not park users and has been the source of some problems within the park. Parks should coordinate with ACDA to determine ways that to better provide parking for park users. Consideration should be given to installing parking meters in the parking lot and providing more supervision of the use of the area.

### **Anchorage Downtown Partnership**

Anchorage Downtown Partnership (ADP) is a 501 (c) 6 non-profit corporation charged with management of the Downtown Improvement District. ADP has entered an agreement with the Port of Anchorage for maintenance of a restroom located at the Ship Creek Boat Launch, south of the Ship Creek outlet. The restroom at the boat launch serves those launching boats as well as many who fish Ship Creek through the fishing season. The restroom is cleaned on a routine basis and has an automatic lock that secures the facility at night. This arrangement appears to be effective at providing a clean and working facility that serves the public good. Elderberry Park serves a mix of visitors and local residents, and no restroom facilities are located near the park. Either port-a-potties behind a screen or a working restroom would be appropriate in Elderberry Park and one or the other are called for in the master plan. An agreement with Anchorage Downtown Partnership may be worthy of consideration and may merit improvements to the existing restroom. The existing cost estimate for capital improvements assumes the restroom would be renovated.

### **M Street Residences**

Any improvements to M Street would need to be coordinated with the multiple parties who live along the roadway to provide for access during construction and driveway curb cuts where needed. There was also an on-going concern during the public process relative to the need for “legal” parking provision for a home that is located north of Elderberry Condominiums.

The issue related to the parking for the residence has to do with whether there is an formalized agreement that might have dedicated two parking spaces at the northern termination of M Street for a private parcel located north of Elderberry Park Condominiums. The planning team contacted the Municipal Surveyor, the Planning Department, and conducted a review of all documents that were available at the State of Alaska Recorder’s Office that affected the Municipally-owned parcel where Oscar Anderson House is located.

Neither the Planning Department nor the Municipal Surveyor was able to shed light on any agreement of any type for the provision of parking for the subject private parcel. The State Recorder’s Office also had no documents in their files that addressed the issue other than a plat that the Municipal Surveyor had in his possession (Recorded Plat 78-77).

That plat provided vacation of the M Street right-of-way at the street’s northern terminus and split the

right-of-way evenly between the Municipality and Elderberry Park Condominiums. There was a reservation of a 10-foot wide “trail easement” at the northern lot line of both parcels. That trail easement appears to provide legal trail access to the private parcel; however, it does not secure parking. Thus no legal document has been found that addresses the provision of parking. This does not preclude providing parking spaces in an agreement of some type between the Municipality and the private owner and the Elderberry Condominiums.

It should be noted that the two parking spots reside largely on Municipal property but partially on Elderberry Condominium property. Further, the actual access is currently across Elderberry Condominium land and that access provision would probably need to continue. This is due to the offset symmetry of M Street, which provides for a driving surface that is mostly located in the eastern portion of the available right-of-way. It is possible that the owner of the affected parcel could engage MOA and Elderberry Condominiums in a discussion of a parking provision at that location. However, the issue is outside the purview of this master plan though any construction should be mindful of the issue.

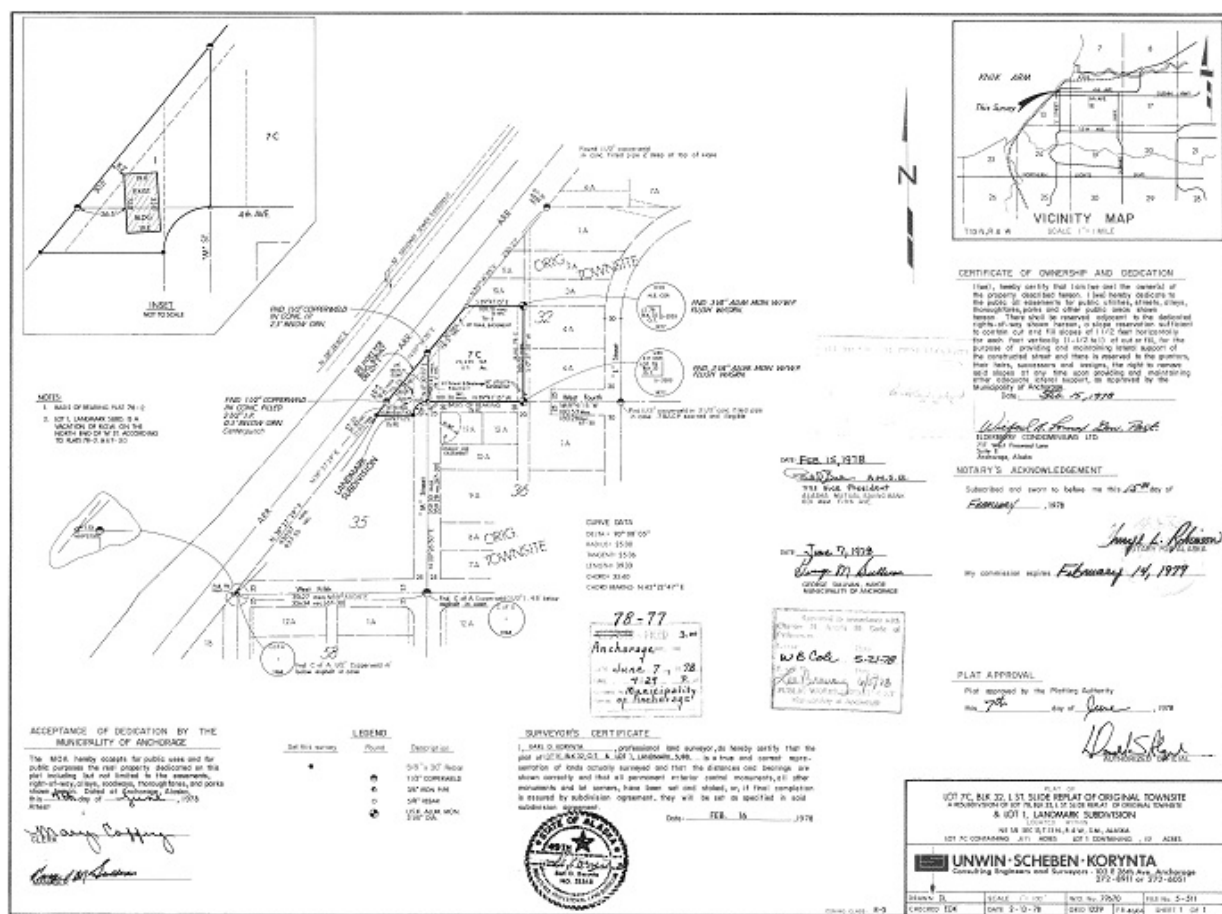


Figure 32: Plat 78-77



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# Appendix A: Meeting Minutes

The planning team held two public meetings and three advisory group meetings through the master plan process. The schedule included the following:

- Advisory Group Meeting #1, February 12, 2015
- Public Meeting #1, February 17, 2015
- Public Meeting #2, March 17, 2015
- Advisory Group Meeting #2, March 26, 2015
- Advisory Group Meeting #3, April 14, 2015

The public process began with an introductory first meeting with the project's advisory group. It was followed by the first public meeting which included an initial site assessment and an examination of public preferences for development within the park. From that beginning, the planning team developed options for consideration by the public at the second public meeting as solutions to issues that had been identified. The last two advisory group meetings helped develop a preferred alternative to move forward to the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission for approval.

## Advisory Group Meeting #1

The planning team provided an introductory presentation to the advisory group on February 12, 2015. The advisory group was composed of local residents, businesses, and downtown interests. The first advisory group meeting was attended by three members of the full group.

Those attending the meeting voiced an interest in “thinking big” as the park plan is put together and to recognize the full spectrum of use both now and in the future. As the city grows, in particular the Central Business District, there will be more demands and pressure placed on the park. However, the park is a neighborhood jewel and its service to the neighborhood is very important. This is not Town Square and it serves a completely different role within the park system. As such, it should feature strong design elements and should provide for small events or occasions that are within walking distance of the nearby community. Some felt that there was an excellent opportunity for some art placement in the park and “avant-garde” furniture that would provide identity and uniqueness to the park.

The advisory group members were very concerned that the park has become a thoroughfare for the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, supplanting more traditional uses within the park. They felt that there needed to be separation between uses. The members also asked that the vacated right-of-way at the north end of M Street be investigated as a more appropriate connection to the Coastal Trail relative to the one that currently exists within the park.

There was discussion about the Oscar Anderson House and its visibility as well as its longevity given some physical drainage problems. Some felt that there should be some investigation of moving the house from its present location to a place more prominent in the park, possibly at the southern portion of the park.

Members discussed the existing unused restroom facility. There was some thought that it should be replaced in whole and a screen with port-a-potties provided to address users' restroom needs. There was also discussion of upgrading the restroom, engaging in a relationship with a business that would provide maintenance and providing a timed locking device to encourage appropriate public use and discourage vandalism and vagrancy. A similar system has been successful at Ship Creek Landing/Boat Launch ramp.

Lastly, there was some discussion that the park should provide a small intimate “green amphitheater” that could accommodate sunset/landscape viewing and possibly small intimate concerts or performances by individual musical artists. It should not take the place of Peratrovich Park or Town Square, but simply facilitate impromptu use appropriate to the scale and function of the park.

## Public Meeting #1

A first public meeting was held on February 17, 2015 at Inlet View Elementary School. Approximately 20 individuals attended and provided input to the planning team. The meeting included a presentation by the planning team that reviewed the existing site conditions as well as the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that are present within the park. The design team solicited additional input and then divided the attendees into three smaller work groups. The work groups were tasked with capturing an identity for the park and also with providing their analysis of the park from their experience.

### Park Identity

The groups shared a collective acknowledgement of the park as a neighborhood park, a trailhead for the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, a place for park visitors to enjoy a spectacular view, and a place to learn about early Anchorage history. Each of the groups articulated a short phrase which expressed the identity that the park offered within the community:

- *"A pedestrian friendly park and a place where Oscar Anderson House would shine"*
- *"It's the view"*
- *"A tourist friendly neighborhood park"*

### Comments

The public provided sticky note comments that were applied to large scale plan sheets. The following is a general discussion of the comments that were provided.

### Use and services

Attendees were concerned about conflicting uses within the park. They felt there were three primary uses—playground activities, viewing opportunities, and trail use. These were not independent, however there needed to be some separation between each so that use was allowed without conflict or compromise of the experience. Better organization of uses within the park would help as would better signage.

Attendees were also concerned about physical aspects of the park. The playground needed to be updated and enlarged, and trail signs and interpretive material needed to be better placed and organized. Also, the fence that separates the park from the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail needed to be upgraded. Further, the plan should capitalize grades within the park and deal with them creatively. The existing restrooms needed to be upgraded, retrofitted to house a vendor, or perhaps simply removed from the park and replaced with port-a-potties and decorative screening.

### Circulation and Access

The attendees felt the park should better accommodate the disabled and better separate traffic streams within the park—cyclists, viewers, and casual neighborhood use. There was a suggestion of moving the parking from 5th Avenue to M Street and a suggestion of making M Street an alley instead of a street. There was also a suggestion of relocating the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail to the west side of the tracks and removing its adjacency to the park and the use of the park as a trailhead.

### Safety

Almost all agreed that the intersection of the park circulation and the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail (just west of Oscar Anderson House) was problematic and safety improvements were needed at that location. Attendees felt signage would help but some users such as some cyclists, skateboarders, and pet walkers were not using the trail in a safe manner. There was a suggestion for adding mirrors at the tunnel under the railroad tracks.

### Maintenance/Management

There was concern for park cleanliness and the need for additional trash receptacles that were located and not "chained to trees." Many wished to get rid of the old restroom building because it added nothing to



the park aesthetically, obstructed views into the park, and served no purpose. Parking was also a concern because the parking lot is a source of some undesirable use in the park. Further, local office workers, seeking to avoid paying for parking, were using the lot that is intended for park use.

## Public Meeting #2

Thirteen individuals attended the second public meeting held on March 17, 2015, at Inlet View Elementary School. The planning team reviewed comments received at the first public meeting and then presented five options based on feedback from that meeting. A list of comments was provided on a handout and attendees were asked to indicate the level of importance that they individually felt each concern represented. The top five comments in order of collective ranking are provided within the categories of: 1) Use and services; 2) Circulation and Access; 3) Safety, and; 4) Maintenance/Management.

### Use and Services

- Provide better signage
- Create more areas to enjoy views
- Enlarge play area
- Provide larger, more readable trail signs
- Separate viewpoints from the trail

### Circulation and Access

- Make the park usable by the disabled
- Remove the northernmost diagonal sidewalk that connects M Street to the plaza
- Add more parking
- Make a wider sidewalk from the park entry
- Remove any through-park trail

### Safety

- Improve the trail intersection at the coastal trail
- Address safety issues of bikes, skateboarders, pets, children
- Improve uneven walking surfaces
- Provide better signage (“children at play,” “caution”)
- Replace play equipment

### Maintenance/Management

- Enforce parking at 5th Avenue
- Improve park cleanliness
- Confirm “landmark” status of Oscar Anderson plot
- Add trash cans close to parking
- Get rid of the toilet building

### Miscellaneous

Additional comments were provided at the meeting including the following:

- Save trees along M Street
- Provide more gardens at the Oscar Anderson House
- Use port-a-potties instead of the restroom
- Keep Oscar Anderson House the same
- Keep the existing coastal trail access
- Examine the land ownership/records of adjacent properties for legal standing of an easement at the north end of M Street
- Replat parcels to make clear the legal standing of any access

Of the comments above, one clearly resonated with all those in attendance and was not represented in the list of comments presented to the public for rating. That comment was the second, “Save trees along M Street.” As an item of some importance to the public, that criterion was found to be affected by the options presented for discussion and evaluation by the attendees to meeting #2. Thus it is added as a sixth criterion under “Use and Services” in the evaluation of options later in this report.

As discussed above, the attendees at the second public meeting provided an input as to what they would choose as a “preferred alternative” or what they might construct as a whole new alternative, based on five options that were presented for review. To provide for a fuller discussion and accommodation of possibly divergent viewpoints, the meeting attendees were broken into two groups and asked to devise a preferred alternative, independent of any discussions with the other group.

Both groups arrived at similar conclusions. The conclusions can generally be described as follows:

- The preferred alternative should be a combination of Options 1 and 2, more approximating Option 2.
- The Tony Knowles Coastal Trail connection should roughly approximate its current location. The trail intersection that is shown in Option 2 should be aligned slightly further from the play area, but carefully avoiding damage to trees along M Street.
- Oscar Anderson House should remain at its current location. There should be a pedestrian connection between Oscar Anderson House and the Tony Knowles Trail connection.
- The Oscar Anderson House site should be improved to provide better access and a setting that provides a more ample front entrance and gardens that might be typical of the period of construction of the house.
- A separate “hybrid” overlook plaza should be established, similar to what is shown in Option 1, in order to separate that activity from the play area and to emphasize the view opportunity. Telescopes/interpretive material might be appropriate at that location.
- The existing restrooms would be reconditioned or removed and screened port-a-potties installed.
- The internal trail should be narrow and meandering, more like what is shown in Option 2, not 8 feet wide as shown in Option 1.
- Tiered seating similar to that shown in Option 4 should be provided to allow informal performances or quiet viewing of the landscape, separated from the continuous trail/path network.
- Public art should be incorporated into the park to provide an identity and some inspiration for park visitors.

## Advisory Group Meeting #2

The planning team provided an update of the public process to the advisory group on March 26, 2015, for their direction regarding the development of a preferred alternative. The planning team reviewed the options that were presented at the second public meeting and the general consensus and direction that was provided by the public. From that, the advisory group provided discussion and direction as follows:

- The advisory group discussed moving the Oscar Anderson House but was concerned about the cost implications of doing so. The idea of improving the setting in the current location seemed appropriate. The advisory group also was interested in something that might suggest revenue-generating potential to assist ongoing improvements to the Oscar Anderson House and other historic properties.
- They supported the idea of a separate overlook plaza that would remove those who wished to view the landscape from ongoing circulation and playground activities.
- They felt a pedestrian connection from the 5th Avenue/M Street intersection to the heart of the park was appropriate. The entrance to the park should be at that intersection and the circulation to primary facilities within the park should be internal from that intersection/entry, not requiring external circulation.
- The advisory group liked the idea of providing a small amphitheater within the park. There was a suggestion to consider including the small remnant MOA owned parcel west of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail.
- A serpentine trail that provided “accessible” grades to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, as shown in Option 4, with origination near the fire hydrant on M Street near Oscar Anderson House, was appropriate as a trail access point.
- The advisory group felt that wayfinding materials should strongly indicate the entry point to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail and reduce the potential for cyclists to travel through the heart of the park to get to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail.
- A 5-6 foot wide meandering trail should connect from the southern portion of the park to the entry trail to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. A trail connection that created a difficult turn for cyclists but was safe for pedestrians would reduce the likelihood of bicycles venturing onto the narrow pedestrian trail.
- Parking should remain as it is presently configured. Moving the parking to M Street would damage existing trees on M Street by intruding into root zones. Increasing the number of parking spots at the present parking location on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue would damage trees that are east of the current parking.
- The playground should be designed to avoid damage to trees that are healthy. This may mean an arrangement different from that shown on the options.
- While liking the serpentine trail connection proposed in Option 4, the advisory group expressed concern about obtaining acceptable grades without dramatically affecting trees or encroaching on valuable open space. They were also concerned that the trail shown in Option 4 could negatively affect the entry to Oscar Anderson House. The advisory group wanted to ensure that if a trail appeared likely to have significant negative effects, then reconsideration of a trail connection at the end of M Street might be appropriate. They also asked that the planning team clarify the legal status of access at the end of M Street if possible.

From the input provided by the advisory group, a “preferred alternative” site plan was developed by the planning team. That preferred alternative was introduced at a third advisory group meeting that was held at Elderberry Park on April 14, 2015.



## Advisory Group #3

At the third advisory group meeting, the group met at Elderberry Park. The planning team placed stakes on the ground to illustrate the location of the proposed new Tony Knowles Coastal Trail trailhead as well as the location of the proposed new overlook. Also, the planning team placed stakes to illustrate the location and limits of the proposed amphitheater.

The advisory group walked through the site in order to gain an understanding of the impacts that the various features would have to the available parkland. The advisory group was fortunate to also have the input of three stakeholders who are affected by any future development of Elderberry Park: 1) the manager of Elderberry Condominiums located directly east of Oscar Anderson House; 2) the executor of the estate of the holders of title to the private parcel that has access concerns earlier discussed, and; 3) a representative of Alaska Association for Historic Preservation and the Oscar Anderson House Museum. Following is a discussion of items considered with respect to the master plan drawing.

- Those present agreed that the footprint shown on the plan for playgrounds was reasonable, providing for a slight increase in the size of the play areas. There was some sentiment that the park should provide a neighborhood-park-sized playground, not a community-park-sized playground.
- The location of the amphitheater and the size of the theater seemed to be the correct fit for the park. Most seemed to like the idea of a stage that was on the western side of the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, adding an interesting and unique twist to the design and layout. The “stage” would be located on MOA owned property, slightly above an existing wall, about midway between the top of the available space and the wall itself. The group discussed whether the amphitheater location provided “hiding places” where undesirable activity could occur. However, the tiers would be easily seen from above the amphitheater and from 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Further, the presence of the coastal trail with its high number of users, results in 360 degrees of view into the amphitheater that should limit the occurrence of undesirable behavior. One member pointed out that while there may be some undesirable use, getting more users into the park by providing such an amenity would deter undesirable use.
- The group liked the size and proposed location for the overlook, slightly separated from the playgrounds. They felt that it provided great views, good interpretive possibilities, and good vision into the amphitheater below.
- Contrary to what was shown on the draft preferred alternative, the group agreed with locating the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail connection at the end of M Street and removing it from a location interior to the park. Members felt this was preferable for a number of reasons:
  - It completely eliminated conflicts associated with trail access and internal park use.
  - It provided better sight distance of oncoming traffic for trail users.
  - The reduction in conflicts and improvement of sight distance should increase safety for both park and trail users.
  - It preserved more of the park for park use instead of circulation use.
  - It located the trail at a place that would bring more people by the Oscar Anderson House Museum, improving its visibility to the public and possibly increasing visitation to the museum.

There were some considerations that arose relative to the location of the trail connection at the northern end of M Street.

In order for the trail connection to meet Americans with Disabilities Access Guidelines, the approaches from the south and north to the new trailhead location would have to be reconstructed to achieve an elevation approximately two or more feet higher than present at the access point.

The group discussed how trail users would arrive from 5th Avenue to the new trailhead. One alternative would be to leave the roadway and walkway as they are, requiring users to travel either on the 5-foot wide sidewalk on the western side of M Street, or to travel in the street. Concern was voiced that requiring bicyclists to travel in the roadway may not be desirable. There is a parking lot off of M Street associated with 420 L Street, as well as traffic that enters and exits the street from Elderberry Condominiums. There are also other properties located along the street that generate some vehicular traffic. Thus, as currently configured, bicyclists would be mixed with pedestrian traffic on a narrow sidewalk, or would have to be in the street with multiple driveways and occasional pulses of traffic at labor shift changes and at the start/end of the work day. The group agreed that a widened sidewalk along the western side of M Street was a preferred solution. They agreed that the provision of a widened sidewalk should not jeopardize any trees under any circumstances. Further study would be needed to determine an appropriate street design that would accommodate a widened sidewalk on the western side of the street and the traffic/parking needs. There was some discussion of whether the parking was needed but it was generally recognized that the parking serves the general downtown Anchorage area and parking provisions in the Anchorage Central Business District is a complex issue that will need to be addressed in the design of the street and sidewalk at the time alterations come about.

The group discussed parking that existed at the end of M Street, used by occupants of the private property to the northeast. While it appeared that the new proposed trailhead and Oscar Anderson House Museum circulation could be fully accommodated on MOA property, it might be possible to provide two parking spaces needed by the private property.

Those present discussed the Oscar Anderson House Museum and what level and type of improvements were appropriate to the house. Advisory group members agreed that (with concurrence of the member of Alaska Association of Historic Preservation who was present):

- Safe maintained summer/winter access to the front of the house was important for visitor comfort and safety.
- Safe access to the basement at the back of the house was needed.
- Gardens that were indicative of the time period of habitation of the Oscar Anderson House seemed like a good idea. The museum would need to procure gardeners to agree to maintain the gardens.
- There should be some consideration to removing the pine tree that is located at the front of the Oscar Anderson House Museum. The tree is not indicative of vegetation present at the time that the Oscar Anderson House was inhabited and detracts from the intent of providing more of “period-specific” landscape relevant to the story of the Oscar Anderson House Museum.
- A gathering area near or at the house would seem appropriate as a possible location where small events and fundraisers could be held. However, anything appended directly to the house could compromise the historical status of the building and probably should be avoided.

## Public Review Preferred Alternative

The planning team further revised the draft master plan to address the concerns of the advisory group and incorporate suggestions. The planning team also coordinated with key individuals in Parks and Recreation Department management, in planning, and in operations and maintenance. Based on the review of the advisory group recommendations, the planning team carried the following considerations forward:

- The configuration of the playground and its adjacent plaza worked well.
- The amphitheater seemed to function well as shown.
- The overlook plaza worked well.
- The open lawn area provided excellent lounging and picnicking opportunities.

The planning team made the following additions and modifications to that proposed by the advisory group.

- The Tony Knowles Coastal Trail access should be located on a widened sidewalk located at the western side of M Street. The trail should be approximately 10 feet wide measured from face of curb. This may require removal of approximately 4-5 parking spaces at the eastern end of the park boundary in order to allow expansion of the sidewalk. While this seemed to work well, there were unresolved issues regarding this connection:
  - While the M Street access seemed to make sense, the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail is located within the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) right-of-way. Permission is required from the ARRC to make this connection.
  - The intersection of the new sidewalk with the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail will require raising the elevation of the trail 2-3 feet to provide for an “accessible” trail.
  - M Street could require re-construction to accommodate the proposed trail connection which could be expensive and difficult to achieve. It may be necessary to re-evaluate the preliminary preferred alternative if the M Street access proves to be impractical or unobtainable.
- A path that meets accessibility criteria should be provided from the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue/M Street intersection. That path would require a circuitous route connecting to the playground plaza with all slopes less than 5%.
- The large open grassed area between the overlook and the Oscar Anderson House Museum would feature tiers that would facilitate picnicking and provide areas with a small amount of paving and picnic tables.
- Art should be incorporated on pedestals at other locations including the set of stairs that connects the plaza to the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue/M Street intersection, and at the ends of the wall that surrounds the overlook.
- The amphitheater should be a series of tiered grassed areas retained by walls that provided no more than 30 inches of drop so that handrails were not required.

# Appendix B: Resolutions

## **A RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTH ADDITION COMMUNITY COUNCIL ADDRESSING THE MASTER PLAN FOR ELDERBERRY PARK**

WHEREAS, on ;October 15, 2015, representatives of the Parks and Recreation Department provided a presentation of the Draft Elderberry Park Master Plan to South Addition Community Council attendees;

WHEREAS, the representatives summarized the public process that included public meetings, advisory group meetings, and a presentation of the process to the South Addition Community Council on December 15, 2014 and May 21, 2015;

WHEREAS, the master plan resolves a number of circulation uses that conflict within the park between Tony Knowles Coastal Trail users and park users;

WHEREAS, the master plan provides for the continuation of existing neighborhood park uses including playgrounds and open lawn areas;

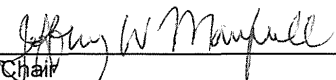
WHEREAS, the master plan provides a scenic overlook that improves casual sightseeing by visitors and local residents by providing a separate area separate from main traffic circulation routes;

and WHEREAS, Oscar Anderson House is proposed to have improvements to its present location that will improve the setting of that historic structure;

NOW, THEREFORE, THE SOUTH ADDITION COMMUNITY COUNCIL RESOLVES:

The South Addition Community Council recommends of approval of the Draft Master Plan by the Parks and Recreation Commission

PASSED AND APPROVED by the South Addition Community Council this 15th day of October, 2015.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair  
President, SACC





**Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska  
Parks & Recreation Department**

632 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 630  
P.O. Box 196650  
Anchorage, AK 99519  
Tel 907-343-4355  
URL [www.muni.org/departments/parks](http://www.muni.org/departments/parks)



**PRC RES NO. 2015-13  
Elderberry Park Master Plan**

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

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

WHEREAS, the Elderberry Park master plan provides a 20 year vision that will address issues and guide future development at the park; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department hosted two public workshops and worked with an advisory group to assist the Department in identifying and prioritizing desired improvements for Elderberry Park; and

WHEREAS, the improvements proposed in the master plan are based on community and stakeholder input and have been vetted by the advisory group through deliberation and consensus; and

WHEREAS, the improvements proposed in the master plan have received support and approval from the South Addition Community Council;

WHEREAS, the improvements identified in the master plan include upgraded play equipment, ADA compliant walkways, a plaza and overlook, a terraced seating area, improved visibility of the Oscar Anderson House, and a re-routing of the Coastal Trail access to M Street;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission approves the master plan submitted by the Department and the advisory group for Elderberry Park.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 10th day of December, 2015.

  
Chair  
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

  
John Rodda, Director  
Parks & Recreation Department

PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT  
Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska