

MULDOON TOWN SQUARE PARK



Muldoon Town Square Park History

To the Dena'ina Athabascan people, "Chanshtnu" (meaning Grass Creek), was an important fishing site. Coho salmon spawn in the headwaters of the creek east of Muldoon Road and south of DeBarr. "Chanshtnu" was long ago anglicized to "Chester" Creek; it never had anything to do with anyone named Chester.

The late Mann Leiser's Alaska Greenhouse, though privately owned, in its heyday was among the most beloved "parks" in town. East Anchorage residents came there year around to marvel at fish and ducks swimming in the creek, next to nursery stock shrubs and trees. Mann Leiser built a greenhouse over Chester Creek and had a permit to use the Creek for non-potable irrigation purposes. However, he did not use the water from Chester Creek, but developed a private water well and septic system on site instead.

The Leiser family home was on a hill behind the greenhouses. The middle and back portion of the property, which extends to the JBER/Fort Richardson boundary, was used as a construction dump for building materials. It is also said to contain debris from the 1964 earthquake. No one knows exactly what's under the surface of the old landfill, or where, but it had long been considered problematic for development for any kind of housing.

After Mann Leiser's death, the Alaska Greenhouse property was sold. A greenhouse collapsed under heavy snow and the U.S. government seized the land from its then owners in a drug case. The Municipality of Anchorage bought it from the federal government in 2006. The Municipality designated the easternmost 12 acres as a yet-to-be-developed Muldoon Community Park; the Muldoon Road frontage was to be sold for commercial development to recoup its investment.

The Northeast Community Council had long sought the entire property, including the frontage, for a "Muldoon Park Strip" to bring needed green space to Anchorage's most densely populated area. A big, green park fronting on Muldoon Road would help define a Muldoon "town center," as envisioned in the Anchorage 2020 Comprehensive Plan. The East Anchorage District Plan, initiated in March 2012 and adopted by the Anchorage Assembly December 2, 2014, designated all 29 acres of the property for a community park.

The Northeast and Scenic Foothills Community Councils vigorously opposed the planned realignment of Chester Creek. While the East Anchorage District Plan was still being developed, the creek was realigned over their objections. The Anchorage Assembly voted to dedicate the entire old Alaska Greenhouse site as park land at a public hearing July 14, 2015.

Area Legislators – Senator Bill Wielechowski, Representatives Pete Petersen and Gabrielle LeDoux – secured two state grants totaling \$1.5 million to plan and develop this new community park. The Muldoon Town Square Park Master Plan process will begin with a public park planning workshop from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Monday, September 28, 2015, at Begich Middle School.

Park History courtesy of the Muldoon Town Square Parks Committee members Jerrienne Lowther, Kristi Wood, and David Ulmer