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MEMORANDUM

Date: April 13, 2023

To: Parks & Recreation Commission

Cc: Mike Braniff, Director; Steve Rafuse, Parks Superintendent

From: Nicolette Dent, Park Planner

Project: PRC 2023-09: Government Hill Neighborhood Parks and Trails Plan

INTRODUCTION

Since its establishment as Anchorage's first original neighborhood, parks and trails have been important to Government Hill. Park land creates a buffer between the neighborhood's residential area and surrounding industrial land. Today, every resident of Government Hill can access a park within a 10-minute walk of their home.¹ Based on the community's interest in a system-wide approach to improving parks, Anchorage Parks and Recreation applied a master plan development process to all parks, trails, and recreation facilities in Government Hill.

PLAN OVERVIEW

The *Government Hill Neighborhood Parks and Trails Plan* guides the development and improvement of parks, trails, and recreation at the neighborhood level, inspired by recommendations in the broader 2013 *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan*. The Parks and Trails Plan proposes six goals to help Government Hill achieve their future vision of improved parks and trails:

1. **Take care of existing assets**, like playgrounds, picnic shelters, and landscaping;
2. **Add new wayfinding, signage, and other amenities** throughout parks and trails to support user experience;
3. **Expand year-round recreational opportunities**, including upgraded play equipment for all abilities;

¹ ParkScore®: Trust for Public Land. Retrieved from <https://www.tpl.org/city/anchorage-alaska>

4. **Manage greenbelt forest health**, including improving trails and restoring scenic views;
5. **Improve non-motorized connections** to parks and trails, both within and outside of the neighborhood;
6. **Develop recreational uses at opportunity sites**, such as converting the upland area of Port of Alaska Tract J into an off-leash dog area or other type of park.

The goals were inspired by common themes that emerged during the public involvement process and were informed by an analysis of park and trail conditions. These themes included maintaining and expanding the recreational buffer of parks, promoting non-motorized connectivity between parks and trails, and improving the East Bluff Greenbelt.

Because of this plan's larger scope, future site planning efforts with the community may be required to achieve development goals. For example, the East Bluff Greenbelt trail emerged as a priority. Residents currently have informal trail access from Sunset and Alderwood Parks. Public discussion revealed interest in creating new trail access from the east side of the neighborhood; however, neighboring homeowners had concerns about privacy. The Parks and Trails Plan recommends first improving the social path and its existing access points. Once the trail is established, a future concept plan with community involvement could identify new access points.

Right: Improving the East Bluff Greenbelt social trail was a community priority. The Plan recommends improving this trail through partnership with the Youth Employment in Parks program.



The Parks and Trails Plan recommends specific improvements at each park. These range from clean-and-green style projects (those that could be accomplished with volunteers and the Department) to capital improvements requiring more substantial resources like bond funds or grants. The Plan includes an implementation chapter and provides cost estimates for park development recommendations.

COMMON THEMES



Government Hill Commons is the Neighborhood Centerpiece

The Commons are both a destination and a transition point between the East and West neighborhoods.



Neighborhood Residents Feel Safe at Parks and on Trails

Residents can travel safely between areas of the neighborhood and parks are secure for all ages.



The Government Hill Greenbelt is a String of Pearls

Parks form a natural buffer encircling Government Hill. Trail users desire a seamless transition across the East and West Bluffs.



The Greenbelt Promotes Scenic Views, Recreation, and Forest Health

Trails allow people to enjoy scenic views and remain consistent with existing natural resource plans.



Parks and Trails Celebrate and Embody the Neighborhood Character

Government Hill's historic character and the unique East and West neighborhood identities should inform future design standards, wayfinding, and new parks or existing park improvements.

Champion the Government Hill Neighborhood Plan

Leverage the 2013 Neighborhood Plan to accomplish park and trail projects and form strategic partnerships.



Improve Access and Connections to Areas Outside Government Hill

Improve bike and pedestrian access to downtown, Ship Creek, and other destinations.



Consider Other Properties as Opportunity Sites for Parks

The defense fuels site and old wireless building are potential assets that could serve as future public spaces or interpretive destinations.



Collaborate with Partners to Achieve Park + Trail Goals

Community grants, Youth Employment in Parks (YEP), housing non-profits, neighboring land owners, and Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) offer resources for goal advancement.



Parks for the Next 100 Years

Ensure parks are formally dedicated to allow these to remain as community assets for the next 100 years and more.



GOVERNMENT HILL PARKS + TRAILS PLAN GOALS



1

Take care of
existing assets



2

Add wayfinding,
signage, and
amenities
throughout parks
and trails



3

Expand year-
round recreational
opportunities



4

Manage greenbelt
forest health



5

Improve non-
motorized
connections to
parks and trails



6

Develop
recreational uses
at opportunity
sites

Development priorities for summers 2023 and 2024 include:

- Upgrading park signage and adding restroom screens at Suzan Nightingale McKay Memorial and Sunset Parks,
- Improving the viewshed of Cook Inlet and the mountains from Suzan Nightingale McKay Memorial Park;
- Installing a fence, signage, and amenities at the Government Hill Commons;
- Improving the social trail and trail access points on the East Bluff Greenbelt through a partnership with Youth Employment in Parks;
- Adding kiosks and wayfinding signage throughout the park system.

PLANNING AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Ten Government Hill community members formed an Advisory Group to help with the site analysis, identify common issues and potential solutions, and provide edits to plan drafts.

There were also several opportunities for public input. In early 2022, a virtual open house provided a safe forum for collecting plan input during the pandemic. An online survey captured community priorities like managing greenbelt forest health and views, upgrading trails, installing signage, and creating an off-leash dog area. In February 2023, 14 participants attended an open house at the Government Hill Elementary School to review plan goals and recommendations for each park. The planning team also visited the Government Hill Community Council to share plan updates and answer questions on three occasions between 2020 and 2023.



Above: The planning team worked with an Advisory Group to do a site analysis of neighborhood parks and trails. Additional public meetings and surveys helped identify common themes and a future vision for the neighborhood park system.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Anchorage Parks and Recreation Department recommends that the Parks and Recreation Commission support the *Government Hill Neighborhood Parks and Trails Plan*. The effort was inspired by the *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan* and endorsed by the Government Hill Community Council, recognizing the role that parks play in making Government Hill a great place to live. The Plan provides a guide for allocating resources across Government Hill's system of parks and trails.



Government Hill

Neighborhood Parks + Trails Plan

March 2023 Public Hearing Draft

Acknowledgments

Anchorage Parks and Recreation

Mike Braniff, Director

Steve Rafuse, Superintendent

Nicolette Dent, Park Planner

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Van Le, Planning Manager

Taryn Oleson-Yelle, Planner

Community Advisory Group

The Community Advisory Group is made up of Government Hill residents, community council members, and representatives of different park user groups.

Susanne DiPietro

Steve Leider

Bob French

Susan Garner

Steve Gerlek

Margy Hughes

John Seigle

Jody Sola

Will Sola



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Introduction

OVERVIEW

Known for being the first of Anchorage's original neighborhoods, Government Hill is distinguished by its historic character and a unique, isolated location. Although Government Hill is located just north of Downtown Anchorage, the neighborhood is only accessible via one road and is bounded by Ship Creek, industrial land, and Joint-Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER).

Based on the community's interest in a system-wide approach to improving parks, Anchorage Parks and Recreation applied a master plan development process to all parks, trails, and recreation facilities in Government Hill. The *Government Hill Neighborhood Parks and Trails Plan* (the Plan) also addresses recommendations captured in the *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan*.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of the Plan is to identify and prioritize future investments in parks, trails, and recreation facilities in the Government Hill neighborhood for the next 20 years. The Plan seeks to address community recreation needs, document issues and concerns, and provide implementation strategies to improve parks and trails in Government Hill.

The Plan also builds on the *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan*, which provides a comprehensive vision for the neighborhood's future development. This document pulls from the *Neighborhood Plan* and other sources to highlight information about population, historic and current land use, and natural environment to situate the current condition of parks, trails, and recreation facilities. A comprehensive public engagement process informed the development of the Plan and the future vision for park improvements in Government Hill.



NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

This plan provides a high-level overview of the history of Government Hill as it relates to the development of parks, trails, and recreation facilities. The *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan*, *Anchorage's Four Original Neighborhoods 2015 Interpretive Plan*, and the *Historic Preservation Plan* take a closer look at the neighborhood's history, context, and community profile.

Development History

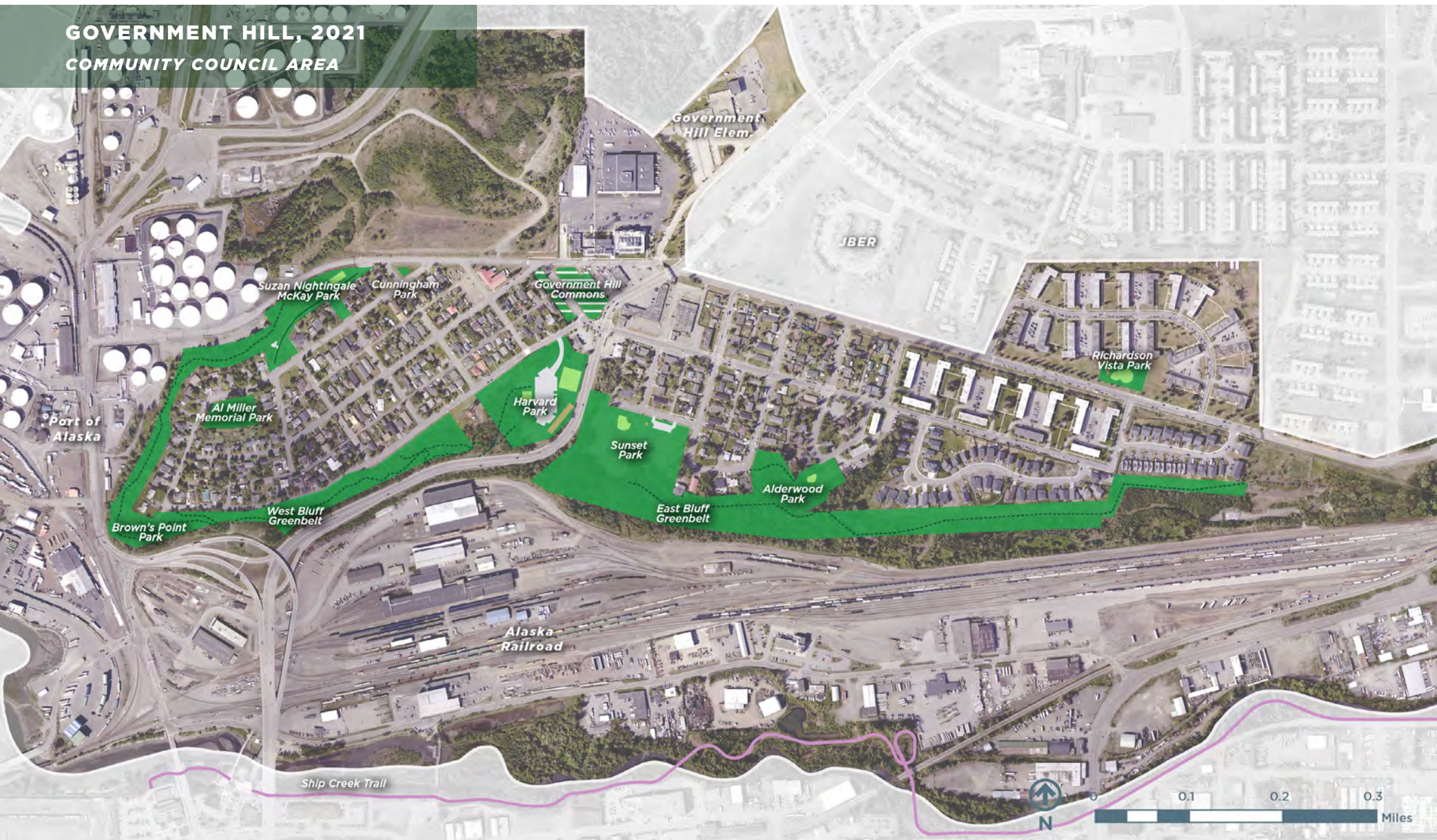
The modern Upper Cook Inlet region includes the traditional lands of Dena'ina Athabascans, whose descendants inhabited the area for thousands of years prior to the development of Anchorage. Government Hill was among four original neighborhoods in Anchorage, serving as a home base for railroad and military workers.

Today, Government Hill remains isolated by industrial, military, and geographic boundaries. The residential area is situated on a bluff north of Downtown Anchorage with JBER at the northern and eastern boundary, the Port of Alaska bordering the west bluff, and Ship Creek and the Alaska Railroad to the south.

Aerial imagery since 1960 visualizes the shifting land use and development of Government Hill, especially on the neighborhood's east side. Post-war housing construction, the 1964 earthquake, urban renewal, and changing industrial use are some of the forces that shaped the neighborhood into how it looks today.



**GOVERNMENT HILL, 2021
COMMUNITY COUNCIL AREA**



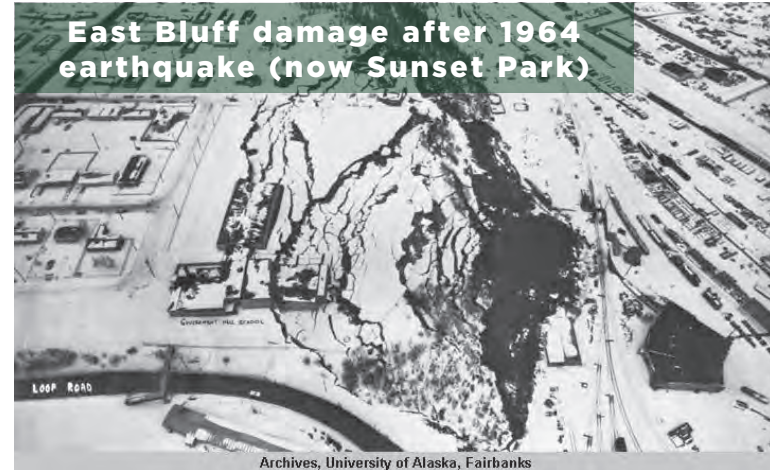
Historic Character and Significant Sites

Parks today reflect the story of Government Hill. Brown's Point and Al Miller Memorial Parks were historically used as open spaces and are included within the Government Hill Federal Historic Housing District. The West Bluff Trail follows a transportation corridor used by residents and railroad workers to travel between Ship Creek and the neighborhood. Dena'ina people used the land long before the development of Anchorage, traveling between fish camps and other resource areas along the coast. Future park improvements can honor the historic character of the neighborhood through interpretative monuments, naming, and design features.

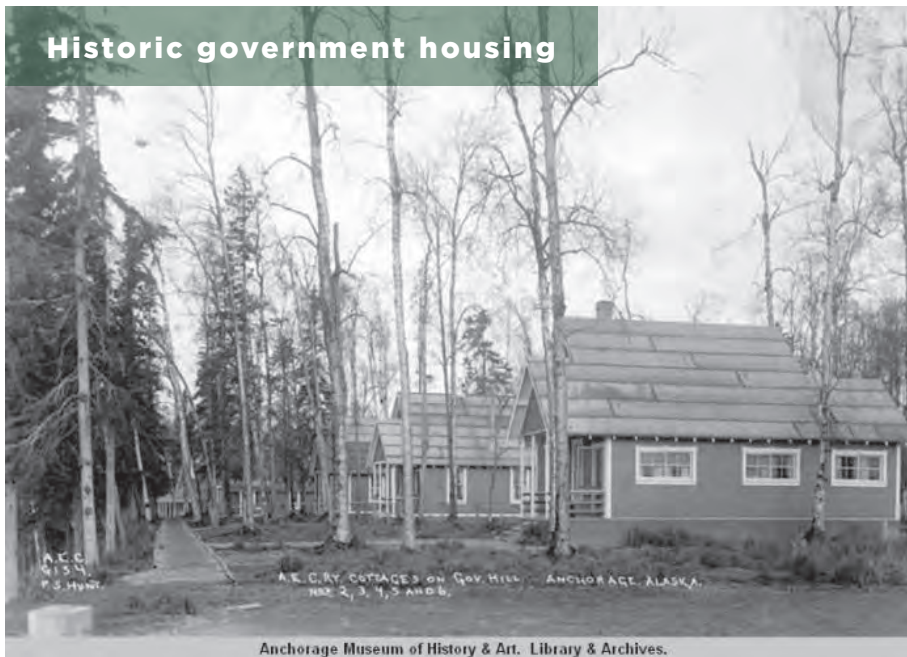
Quonset hut housing



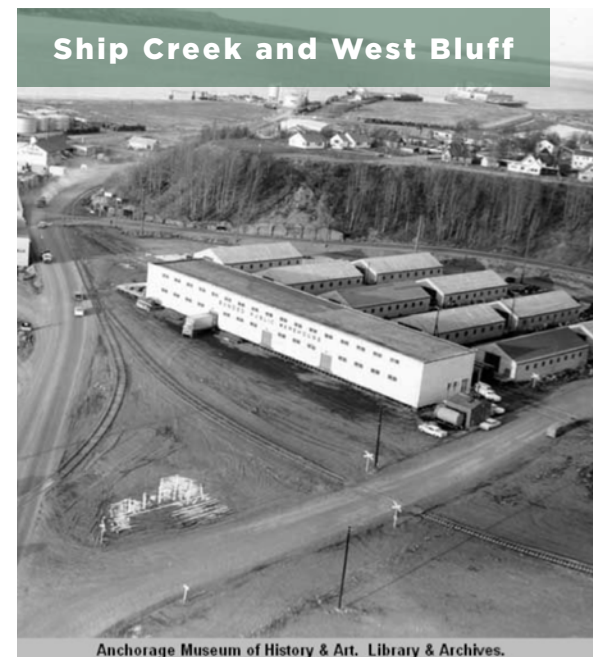
East Bluff damage after 1964 earthquake (now Sunset Park)

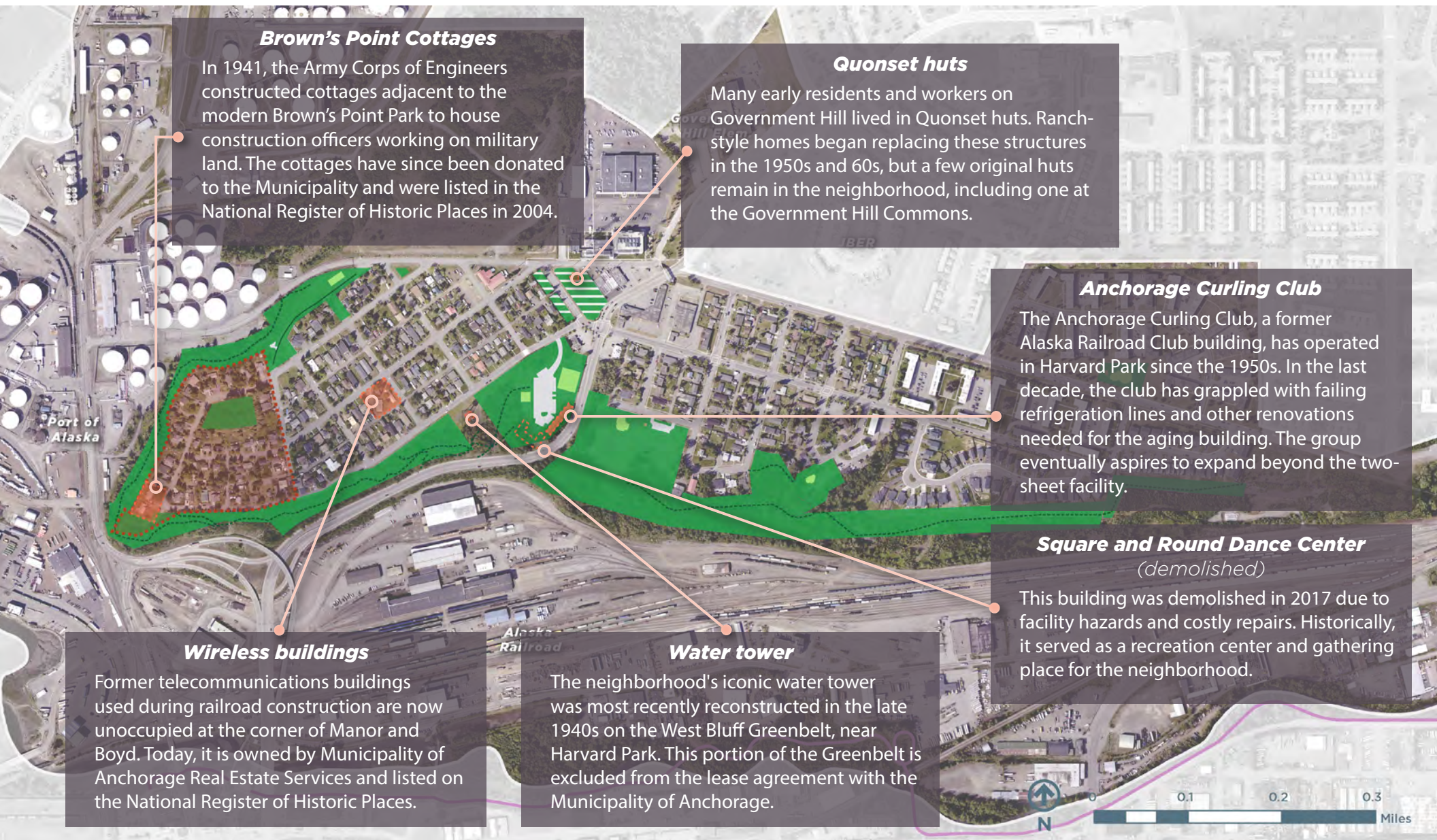


Historic government housing



Ship Creek and West Bluff





Brown's Point Cottages

In 1941, the Army Corps of Engineers constructed cottages adjacent to the modern Brown's Point Park to house construction officers working on military land. The cottages have since been donated to the Municipality and were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2004.

Quonset huts

Many early residents and workers on Government Hill lived in Quonset huts. Ranch-style homes began replacing these structures in the 1950s and 60s, but a few original huts remain in the neighborhood, including one at the Government Hill Commons.

Anchorage Curling Club

The Anchorage Curling Club, a former Alaska Railroad Club building, has operated in Harvard Park since the 1950s. In the last decade, the club has grappled with failing refrigeration lines and other renovations needed for the aging building. The group eventually aspires to expand beyond the two-sheet facility.

Square and Round Dance Center (demolished)



This building was demolished in 2017 due to facility hazards and costly repairs. Historically, it served as a recreation center and gathering place for the neighborhood.

Wireless buildings

Former telecommunications buildings used during railroad construction are now unoccupied at the corner of Manor and Boyd. Today, it is owned by Municipality of Anchorage Real Estate Services and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Water tower

The neighborhood's iconic water tower was most recently reconstructed in the late 1940s on the West Bluff Greenbelt, near Harvard Park. This portion of the Greenbelt is excluded from the lease agreement with the Municipality of Anchorage.

 Government Hill Federal Historic Housing District  Significant Site  Parks

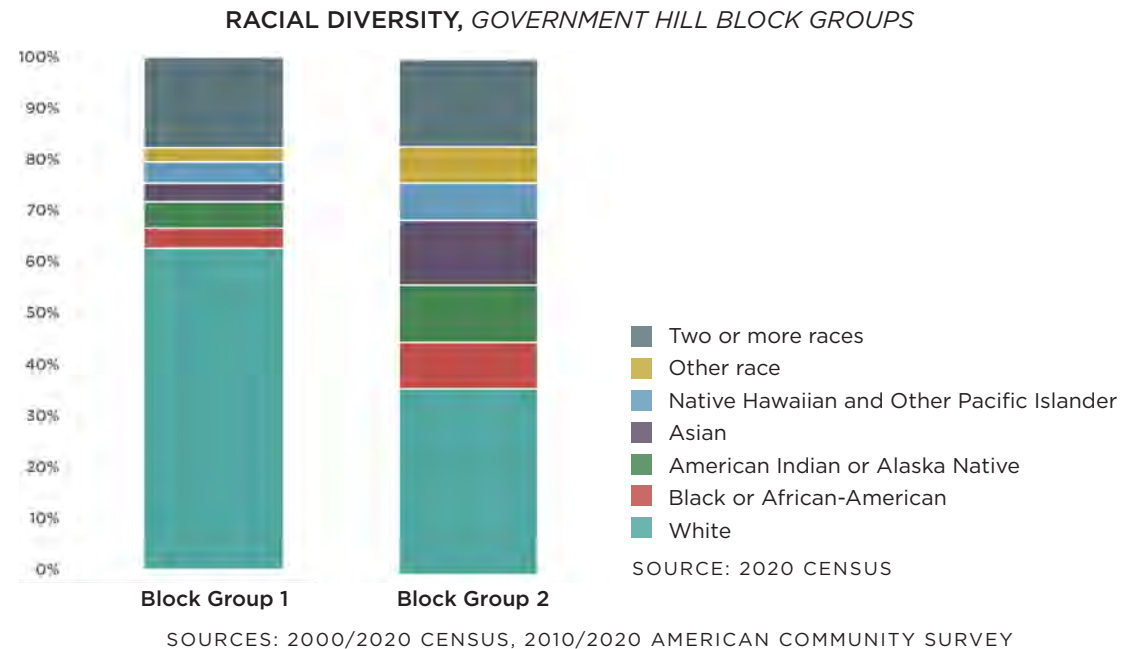
COMMUNITY PROFILE

The *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan* provides a thorough description of the neighborhood population. Since the Neighborhood Plan's adoption, data from the 2020 Census and multiple American Community Surveys provide additional context.

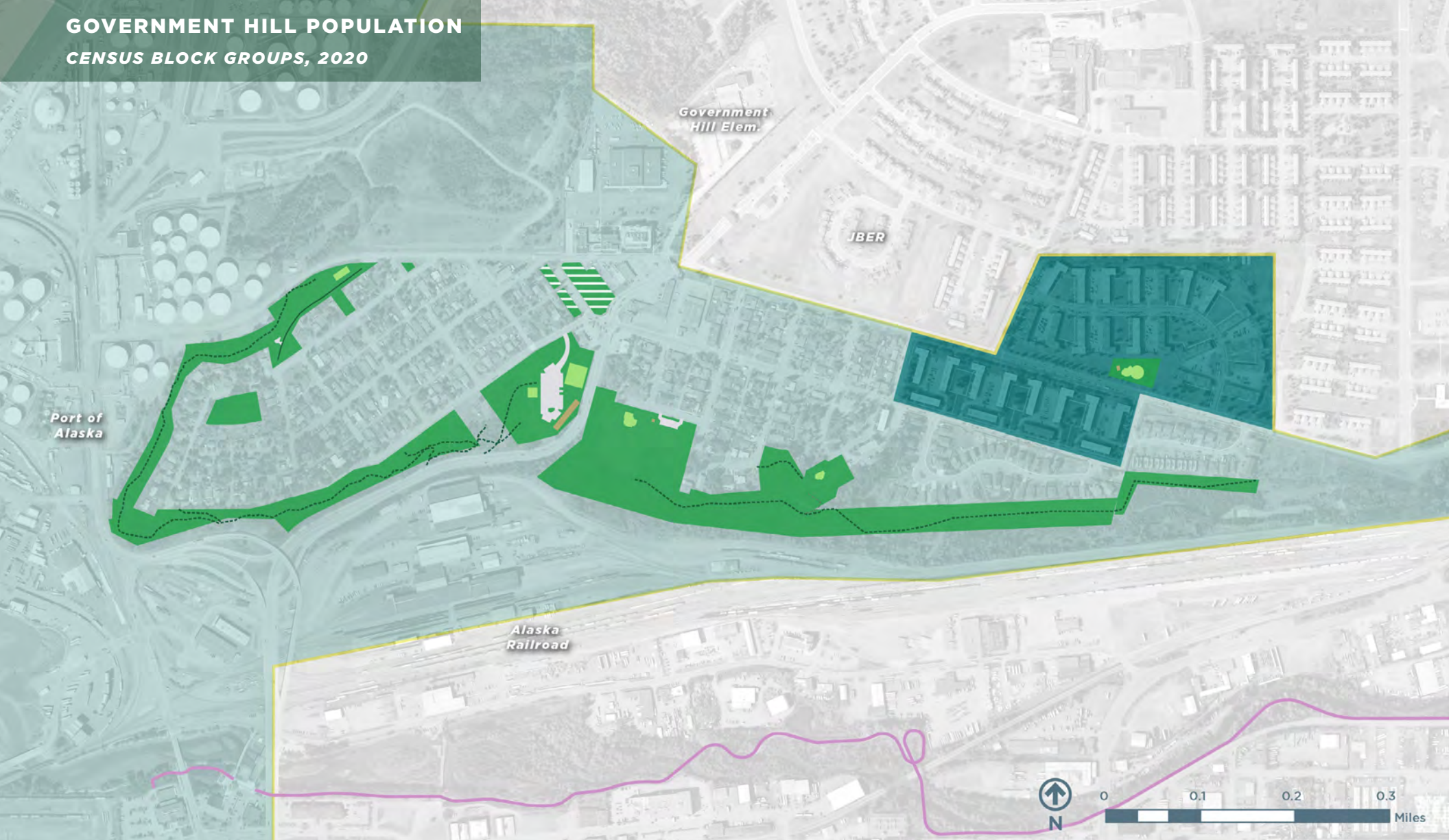
In 2020, there were 2,124 people living in Government Hill, an increase of 7% (136 people) since 2010. The proportion of people between 15 and 44 years old has grown since 2000, while the proportion of youth (18 and younger) has declined. The proportion of people aged 65 years and older has remained more stable over time, and is similar to Anchorage as a whole.

Government Hill (Census Area 5) includes two Block Groups. Comparing the Block Groups reveals a few important distinctions:

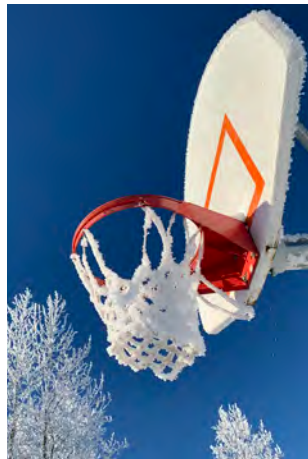
- **Density:** Block Group 2 is made up of apartment complexes and is more densely populated than the rest of Government Hill. In 2020, 970 people lived across Block Group 1 while 1,154 people resided in the apartments complexes that make up Block Group 2 (see map at right).
- **Housing tenure:** The 2019 American Community Survey reports that 100% of households in Block Group 2 were renter-occupied compared to 47% of households in Block Group 1.
- **Diversity:** The 2020 Census shows that Block Group 2 is more racially diverse than Block Group 1 – 36% of residents identify as white alone compared to 63% of Block Group 1 (see chart at right).



GOVERNMENT HILL POPULATION
CENSUS BLOCK GROUPS, 2020



- Block Group 1
970 people
- Block Group 2
1,154 people
- Census Area
Boundary
- Parks
- Ship Creek Trail



2

Parks and Trails: Today

CONTEXT

Parks have been identified by the community as one of the neighborhood's strongest assets. Every resident of Government Hill can access a park within a 10-minute walk of their home compared to 75% of all Anchorage residents.¹

Municipal parkland encircles the core residential area of Government Hill, forming a natural buffer from industrial uses and providing plentiful greenspace access for residents. An established trail traverses the forested West Bluff Greenbelt. Residents also use an unmanaged trail along the East Bluff Greenbelt. While Government Hill has strong neighborhood park access, the surrounding industrial and military lands and the bluff's geographic isolation prevent direct access to the larger multi-use trail system, including Ship Creek and Tony Knowles Coastal Trails.

1. ParkScore®: Trust for Public Land. Retrieved from <https://www.tpl.org/city/anchorage-alaska>

GOVERNMENT HILL
EXISTING PARKS, TRAILS, AND
RECREATION FACILITIES



- | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------------|---|---------|---|------------|---|----------------|---|-----------|
|  | Curling |  | Tennis |  | Sledding |  | Picnic area |  | Viewpoint |
|  | Basketball |  | Orchard |  | Playground |  | Picnic shelter |  | Trailhead |

LAND USE

Overview

Parks and natural areas border Government Hill to the west and south. The neighborhood center includes a small commercial area with restaurants, convenience stores, and the Government Hill Commons. Government Hill Elementary School sits at the northern end of the neighborhood near the JBER checkpoint. Residential areas are located both east and west of E Loop Rd.

West of E. Loop Road is a single-family/two-family residential district. This side of the neighborhood is characterized by narrower streets, houses with alley access, and views of Knik Arm, Denali, and the Port of Alaska. West of Brown St. includes historic properties and parks registered under the Federal Historic Housing District.

Turning east off E Loop Rd. leads to another single-family/two-family neighborhood. At the furthest east section of the neighborhood is a denser multiple-family area with numerous apartment buildings, wider streets, and panoramic views of the Chugach Mountains.

Designations from the *Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan* (page 12) reflect a desire to maintain the neighborhood's existing commercial center and park and greenbelt buffer. Sunset Park and Richardson Vista Parks are listed as Park or Natural Area, reflecting that they are an existing or planned municipal open space. Railroad greenbelt property is designated as Other Open Space, meaning areas expected to continue providing functions like visual buffering or recreation.

The *Land Use Plan* also identifies Potential Open Space in Government Hill, a designation reserved for industrially-owned open space and greenbelts. In some cases, landowners already allow public access and social trails in these areas. North of the west residential area, the “defense fuels site” (parcel #002-021-500) is marked as Potential Open Space and currently owned by the Port of Alaska. The port shut down operations in 1996 after significant contamination was discovered on site.

Zoning

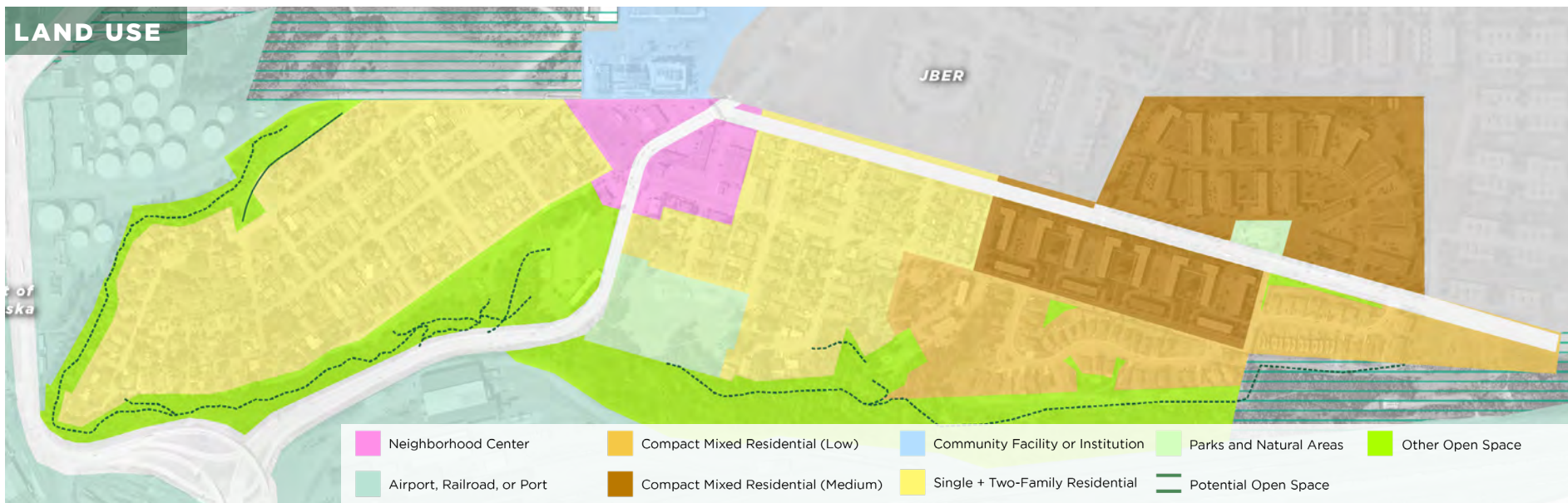
Zoning is a sub-characteristic of land use that defines and regulates land use through design and development requirements and guidelines. The greenbelt buffer and adjacent parks are zoned for Parks under PLI-P or PLI. A Local and Neighborhood Business zone (B-1A) encompasses the neighborhood center and the Government Hill Commons. Residential areas range from Two-Family to Multifamily zones (R-2D, R-3 SL, and R-4), which also include neighborhood parks (Appendix A). Heavy Industrial (I-2) and Marine Commercial (MC) border the neighborhood.

Many of the parks in Government Hill have been dedicated except the Government Hill Commons, Government Hill Greenbelt, Harvard Park, and Richardson Vista Park, as the Municipality manages these parcels under a lease or cooperative use agreements (see Appendix A).

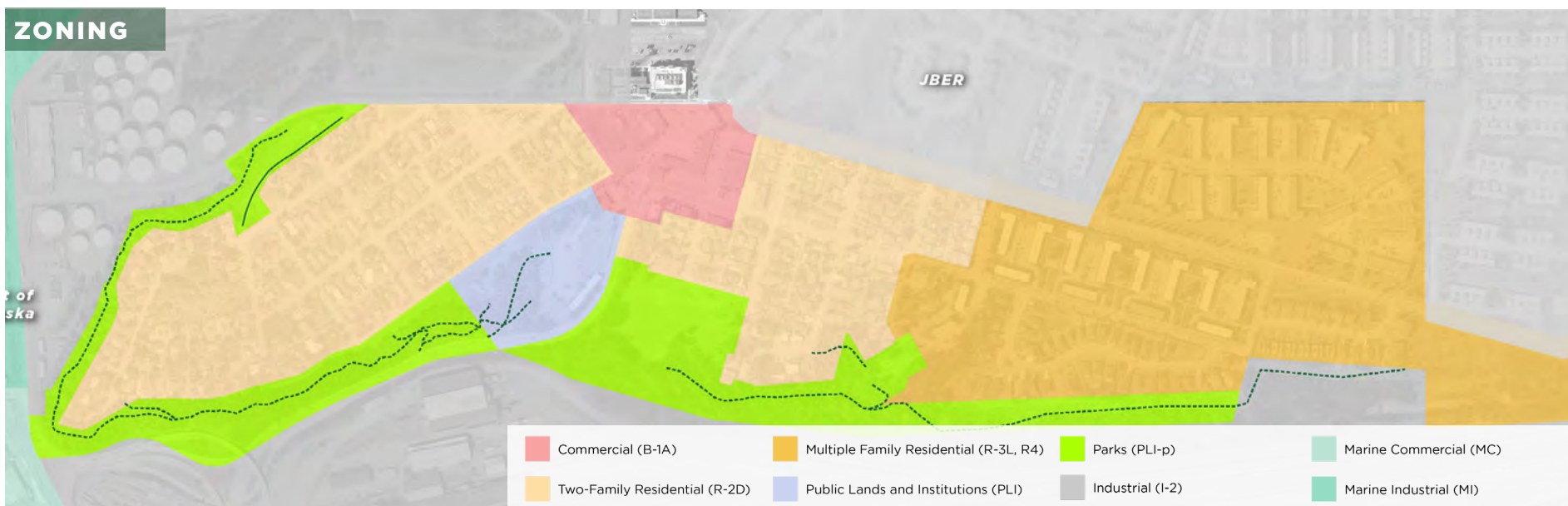
Land Ownership

Surrounding the residential area of Government Hill, land is owned by the Alaska Railroad Corporation, the Port of Alaska, or JBER. Other property owners within the neighborhood include corporations, religious groups, school groups, NeighborWorks Alaska, Catholic Social Services, the Municipality, and the U.S. Department of the Interior. Undeveloped land in the neighborhood includes a Heritage Land Bank site (parcel #003-041-97-000) adjacent to the East Bluff Greenbelt. To the east of this parcel is a vacant site being transferred to Heritage Land Bank ownership (#003-04-195-000).

LAND USE



ZONING



ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS

Vehicles and Parking

E Loop Rd. leads north into Government Hill from downtown Anchorage and is the only public access to the neighborhood. The same road also provides access to the Port of Alaska and JBER. E Loop Rd. ranges from a Class II to III Arterial with a reported Average Annual Daily Traffic count of 9,000 in 2019.

Most parking available near parks in the neighborhood are on-street. There are parking lots at Harvard Park (approximately 100 spaces), Sunset Park (approximately 15 spaces), and Brown's Point Park (less than 5 spaces). Southwest of Suzan Nightingale McKay Park, there are two small lots off E Cook Ave with limited off-street parking.

Pedestrians and Bicycles

The East Government Hill residential area has paved sidewalks. A sidewalk also travels along E. Loop Rd and provides informal access to the West Bluff Greenbelt trails. Parks and Recreation is responsible for some snow clearing and sidewalk maintenance in the neighborhood, including the A/C couplet bridge separated pathway, E Loop Rd., the pathway in Suzan Nightingale McKay Memorial Park, and sidewalks along Hollywood Dr. and E Bluff Dr. The Ship Creek Trail is also plowed in winter.

Government Hill does not have dedicated bike lanes. There is currently no formal wayfinding or directional signage related to parks or trails in Government Hill.

Public Transit

People Mover Route 41 connects between Government Hill and downtown, making a loop around east Government Hill via E Bluff Dr., Richardson Vista Rd., Ivy St. and Hollywood Dr.

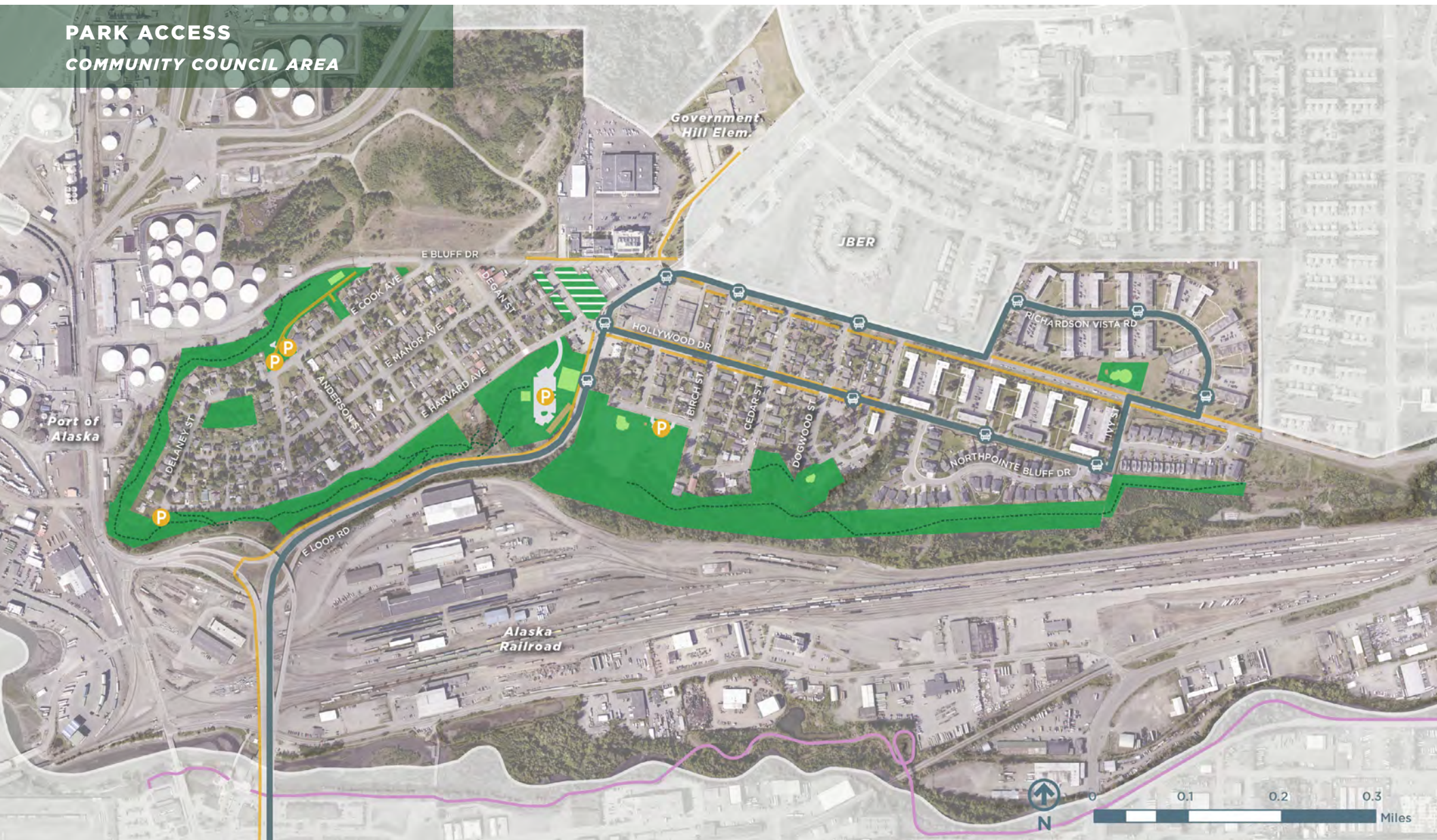


Above: School crossing signage near Government Hill Elementary School.



Above: Sidewalk leading to downtown along E Loop Rd.

PARK ACCESS **COMMUNITY COUNCIL AREA**



— Ship Creek Trail Bus Stop — Bus Route Parking Parks — Sidewalks with Snow Clearing - - - - - Soft-surface trail — Paved pathway

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Government Hill neighborhood is elevated on a bluff north of Ship Creek, with a forested greenbelt encircling the bluff and leading down to the creek. The greenbelt supports recreational use, but connectivity to the Ship Creek Trail and the coastline is blocked by industrial land use. The summary below describes the natural environment, with a more detailed analysis available in the *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan*.

Surficial Geology: The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service identifies primarily alluvial soils on the Government Hill bluff. Colluvium slope deposits are found at the top of the bluff transitioning to Bootleggers Cove Clay at the base.

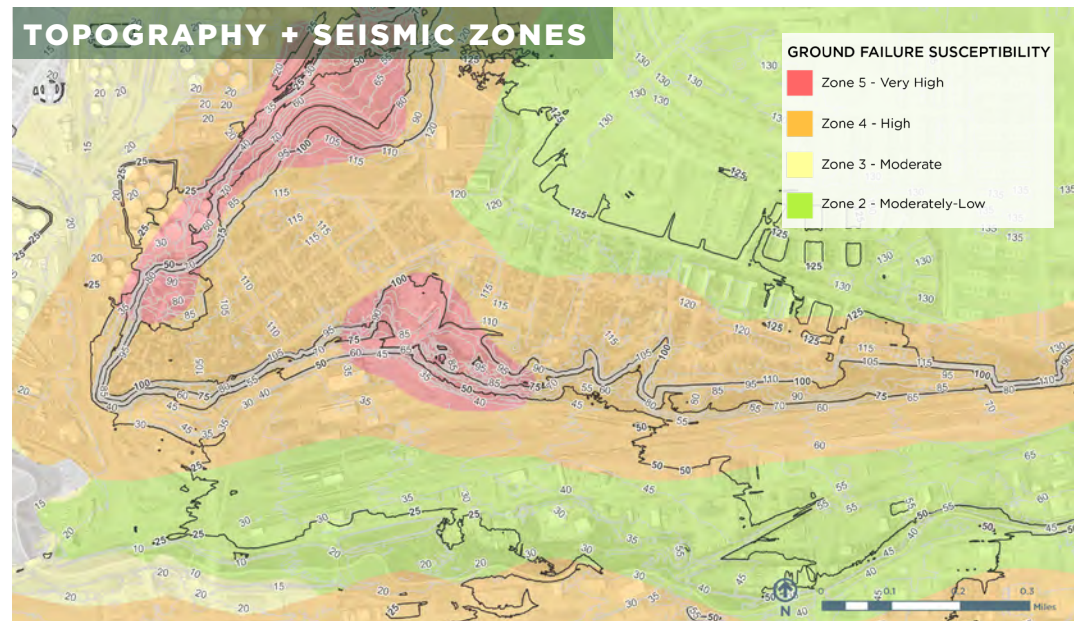
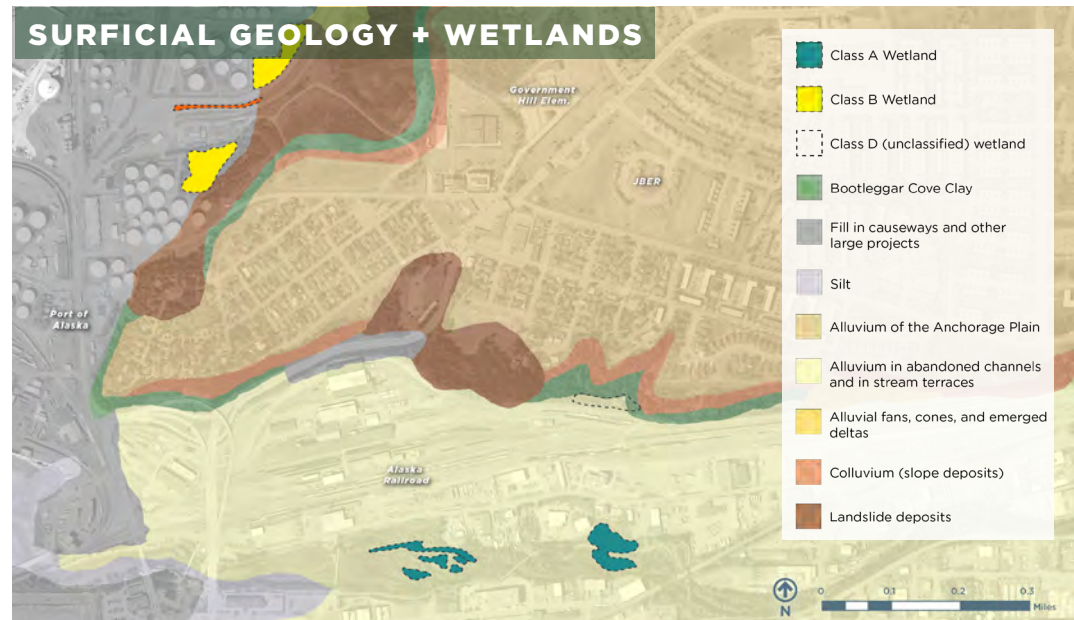
Watersheds, Wetlands, and Flood Plains: Government Hill is part of the Ship Creek watershed. The Ship Creek area is a regulatory floodway. There is low flood risk in residential, commercial, and park areas due to the neighborhood's elevation.

Wetland areas are present around Government Hill, including Class A wetlands around Ship Creek, Class B and D (unclassified) wetland northwest of the defense fuels site, and Class D wetlands located south of Alderwood Park in the East Greenbelt.

Vegetation: The West and East Bluff Greenbelts form a vegetative buffer around the Government Hill neighborhood and help with erosion control. The forest is mostly native trees like birch, willow, cottonwood, spruce, and alder.

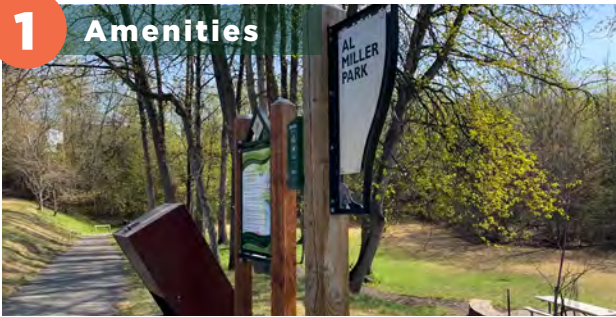
Topography: The residential and commercial area of Government Hill ranges between 100 to 150 feet above sea level.

Seismic Zones: Most of Government Hill is rated Seismic Zone 4 (High Ground Failure Susceptibility) with smaller areas in Zone 5 (Very High Ground Failure Susceptibility).



PARKS: EXISTING CONDITIONS

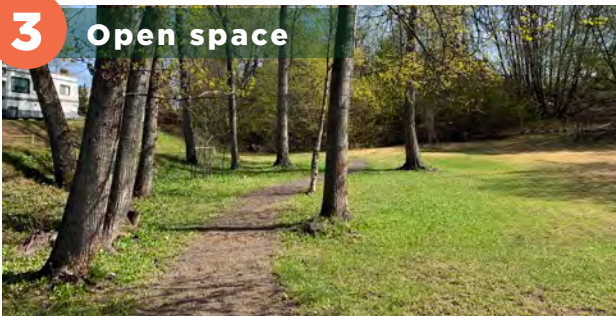
1 Amenities



2 Skateboard rails



3 Open space



4 Picnic area



Al Miller Memorial Park



Acquired in 1975, Al Miller Memorial Park was named for a Lions Club member who helped develop the park. Historical uses of this area include gardens, an ice rink, and a fox farm in the 1930s. The park features an open grassy field and a short, paved trail leading down to a picnic area. There are three skateboard rails along the trail in fair condition. An alleyway and forested buffer separate the park from neighboring residences at the south boundary.

The park is in generally good condition and was one of eight neighborhood parks nominated for renovation and revitalization as part of the 2010 Neighborhood Park Fix-Its campaign. Bricks on one end of the seat wall around the picnic area need repair and weeds are present in the asphalt. There are downed trees and invasive species around the forested area.

Park Features:

- Park signage
- Mutt Mitt station
- Bear-proof trash can
- Paved and soft-surface pathway
- Skateboard rails
- Picnic table and seat wall
- Open space
- Sledding hill



PARKS: EXISTING CONDITIONS

Alderwood Park



As part of a lease agreement with the Alaska Railroad, the Parks and Recreation Department first improved this park in the early 1960s. The current train-themed play equipment was installed in the summer of 1997 and is frequently used by a neighboring childcare center. The playground surface is pea gravel and the equipment is chipped and peeling in certain places.

The park also includes swings, picnic tables, and open space. A short soft-surface trail and bridge connect to the corner of Cedar St. and Sunset Dr. There is an informal access point in the southwest corner of the park that connects to the East Bluff Greenbelt social trail.

Park Features:

- Play equipment
- Bench
- Picnic tables
- Open space
- Bear-proof trash can
- Soft-surface trail connector to Cedar St.
- Informal trail access to East Bluff Greenbelt
- Port-a-potty



PARKS: EXISTING CONDITIONS

1 Parking area



2 Trail access



3 Pathway



4 Viewpoint



Brown's Point Park



This open space at the western point of Government Hill was acquired by the Bureau of Land Management in 1960. A Boy Scout troop built the totem pole that still overlooks Knik Arm and Downtown Anchorage. In 2008, a Challenge Grant enabled Parks and Recreation to update the path leading to the west-facing overlook. Brown's Point Park also provides access to the West Bluff Trail which was improved in 2019 with a Recreational Trails Program grant. Early Alaska Railroad maps show routes through the greenbelt used for transportation between Ship Creek and workers' homes on the bluff.

Park Features:

- Totem pole
- Benches
- Scenic views of Downtown, Knik Arm, and the port
- Picnic table
- Paved pathway (Stuart C. Hall Footprints Walkway)
- Open space
- Off-street parking area and gate (limited spaces)
- Trail access point to West Bluff Greenbelt
- Bear-proof trash can



PARKS: EXISTING CONDITIONS

Cunningham Park



Cunningham Park is an undeveloped park and Anchorage's smallest park parcel at 0.5 acres. The park was named for John Cunningham who moved to Anchorage in 1916 to work for the Alaska Railroad.

Park Features:

Undeveloped. In winter, the parcel is used for snow storage.



PARKS: EXISTING CONDITIONS

1 Open space



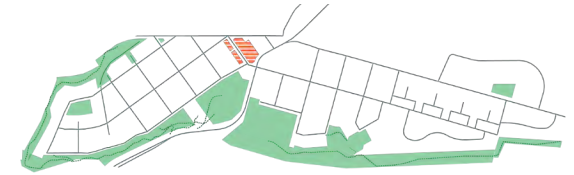
2 Orchard



3 Open space



Government Hill Commons



The Commons is a community orchard and public gathering space. In 2015, the state demolished a former motel and housing on this property with intent to use the site for the Knik Arm bridge project. After the project halted in 2016, the Government Hill Commons non-profit began leasing the parcels from the Alaska Department of Transportation Public Facilities at no cost and manages the space under a Cooperative Use Agreement with Parks and Recreation.

The orchard includes various apple, pear, and cherry trees. Government Hill residents can reserve garden beds or trees and the elementary school participates in harvest and spring cleanup. A Quonset hut sits on the property's north end. The Commons also feature programming in summer months such as outdoor yoga, live music, and storytelling. Parks and Recreation added water service to the site in 2020.

Park Features:

- Irrigation
- Temporary fencing around boundary
- Community orchard
- Quonset hut
- Cider press
- Mural
- Flexible event space



PARKS: EXISTING CONDITIONS

Harvard Park



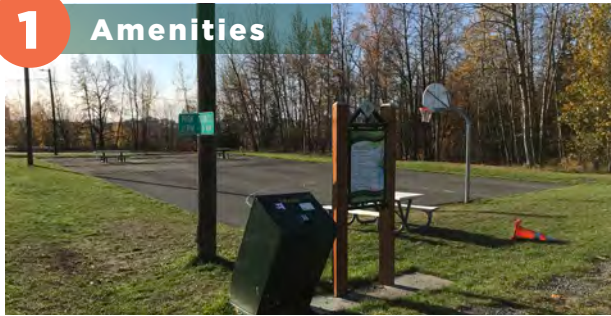
Harvard Park was first leased from the Alaska Railroad in 1961. A number of buildings formerly used by the railroad were adopted for recreational use as industrial use slowed. A curling facility has been operated by the Anchorage Curling Club since the 1950s. The club has more demand for membership than they have space, and the facility has required major repairs as it ages. The Square and Round Dance Center was removed from this site in 2017.

Harvard Park has a dedicated parking lot with approximately 100 spaces, a basketball court, small picnic area, and two tennis courts. The tennis courts and parking lot surfacing are in fair condition. The park supports community events such as cyclocross and curling competitions.

Park Features:

- Basketball court
- Tennis courts (2, 1 with pickleball lines)
- Bear-proof trash can
- Picnic tables
- Parking (100 spaces)
- Curling Club (2 sheets)
- Access to the West Bluff Greenbelt trail
- Sledding hill

1 Amenities



2 Curling club



3 Tennis courts



4 Greenbelt access



PARKS: EXISTING CONDITIONS

1 Play area



2 Picnic shelter



3 Play area and lawn



4 Amenities



Richardson Vista Park



Richardson Vista Park is a small leased area that serves the most densely populated part of the neighborhood. Since 1983, the Parks & Recreation Department has leased less than one acre of the property from the landowner (as of 2022: PacRim Properties, LLC). The landowner maintains an open lawn and Mutt Mitt stations surrounding the leased area. Behind the apartment complexes are resident gardens, an informal walking path, a fenced dog park, and a small play area.

Within the leased area, there is a larger play area and a picnic shelter. Parks and Recreation upgraded the playground here in 2004 as part of a Community Development Block Grant parks rejuvenation project. The play area includes pea gravel surfacing, swings, a tot lot, and equipment for 5-12 year olds. Some of the equipment is faded or aging, and the climbing net is missing a section of rope.

Park Features:

- Play equipment (tot lot and 5-12 years old)
- Picnic shelter
- Benches
- Mutt-mitt stations
- Bear-proof trash can
- Open space (landowner-managed)



PARKS: EXISTING CONDITIONS

Sunset Park



This park was the original site of Government Hill Elementary School, which was destroyed in the 1964 earthquake and removed in the late 1970s. The land was acquired as parkland in 1968 and named by the Government Hill Community Council. The park features a picnic shelter, play equipment for 5-12 year-olds, and an area with picnic tables on the park's southern boundary. Near the play equipment and shelter, a slope serves as a popular sledding hill in winter. The park was formerly connected to water service but is no longer functional.

Park Features:

- Play equipment
- Benches
- Picnic tables
- Picnic shelter
- Bear-proof trash cans
- Charcoal deposit bin
- Little Free Library
- Port-a-potty in summer
- Open field
- Sledding hill

1 Play area



2 Picnic shelter



3 Amenities



4 Open space



PARKS: EXISTING CONDITIONS

1 Inclusive play



2 Trail access



3 Pathway



4 Interpretive signs



Suzan Nightingale McKay Memorial Park



This park was acquired in 1954 and originally called McKinley View Park, attracting visitors for the views of Denali and Knik Arm. Since then, vegetation on port property and the greenbelt has grown and affected views. A decorative hedge is maintained on the west boundary. The first playground was installed in 1993 through donations and volunteer efforts. In 1997, a renaming honored writer and teacher Suzan Nightingale McKay.

Mammoth-themed inclusive play equipment (Level 2 inclusive rating) was installed in 2015 and remains in good condition. This park also includes access to the West Bluff Greenbelt Trail, open space, interpretive monuments, and benches. A paved pathway covers a former vehicle driveway following the east and south park boundary and is varying condition. Some wooden bollards and park signs are in need of repair or replacement.

Park Features:

- Play equipment (level 2 inclusive)
- Benches
- Picnic tables
- Trail access point
- Paved pathway
- Interpretive monuments and viewsheds
- Open space



GREENBELT: EXISTING CONDITIONS

The greenbelt is managed by Parks and Recreation under a lease agreement with the Alaska Railroad and is divided into west and east sections by E Loop Rd. The intended character of the lease area is for "low intensity park development and trails for public use." Vegetation across both sections is characteristic of the Anchorage Bowl, including birch, mountain ash, willow, cottonwood, spruce, alder, and invasive bird cherry.

West Bluff



An established soft-surface trail wraps around the West Bluff and connects Harvard Park to Suzan Nightingale McKay Park. The West Bluff Trail Connection was completed in 2019 through an Alaska Recreational Trails Program grant awarded to the Federation of Community Councils. There are both formal and informal access points along this segment of trail, and trail users are treated to views of the port, Cook Inlet, Mount Susitna, and Downtown Anchorage.

Park features:

- Managed trail (improved in 2019)
- Bench overlooking the Port of Alaska
- Bear proof trash bin and Mutt Mitt station at Brown's Point Trailhead
- Limited informal wayfinding
- Water tower (on Alaska Railroad land, excluded from the lease agreement)



GREENBELT: EXISTING CONDITIONS

1 Undeveloped trailheads



2 Alderwood Park connection



3 Social trail



4 Security fence



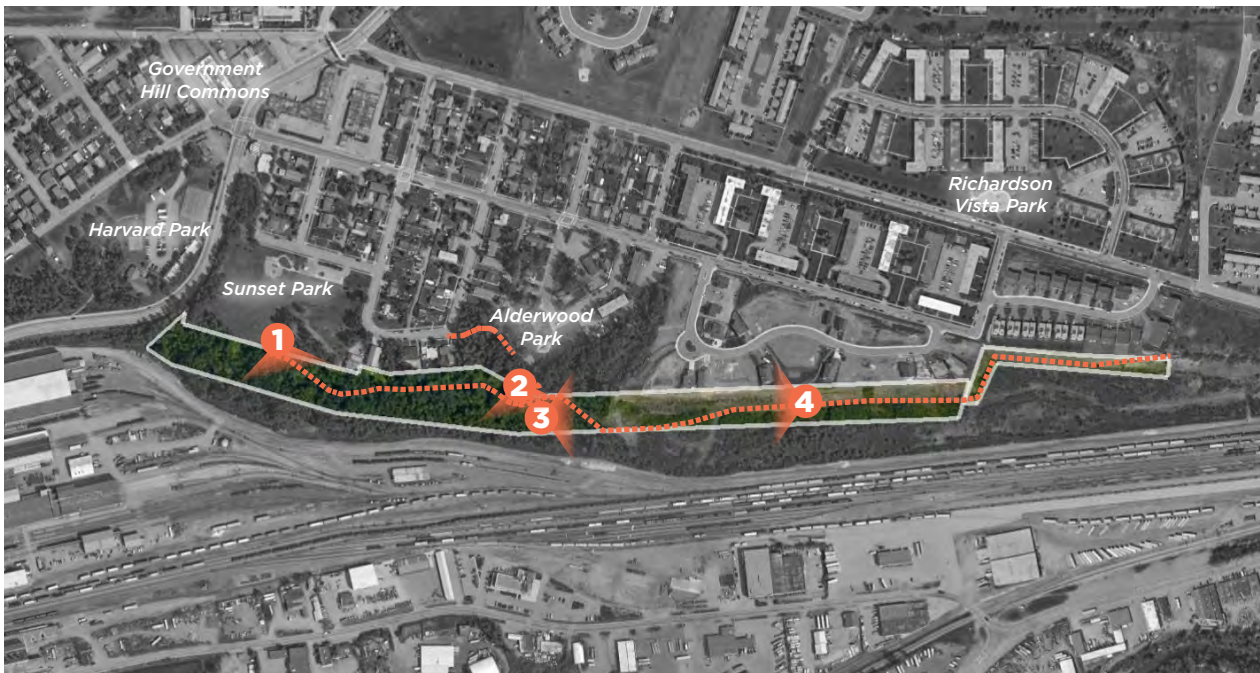
East Bluff



An unmanaged social trail traverses the lower East Bluff between Sunset Park and the Heritage Land Bank parcel on the east end of the neighborhood. The trail closely follows a security fence that provides boundary between the Parks and Railroad management areas. The fence is not placed exactly on the leased area boundary. According to the lease agreement, Parks and Recreation is responsible for maintaining the fence in this approximate location. There is an approximately 100-foot section of fence damaged near Alderwood Park.

Park features:

- Undeveloped social trail, including informal access from Alderwood, Sunset Parks, North Pointe Bluff homes, and the east end of the greenbelt
- Views of Cook Inlet and the Chugach Mountains
- Chain link fence





3

Planning and Public Involvement

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Phases of plan development included information gathering, community visioning, concept and plan development, and approvals. The planning team engaged the public throughout each stage and provided updates to the public through public meetings, the Government Hill Community Council, and the project website.

- **Information gathering:** Outreach, inventory of existing conditions, site walks, issue identification, community profile, property and land use research.
- **Community visioning:** Synthesis of community input into common themes, exploring solutions to issues, and identifying and prioritizing future improvements.
- **Plan development:** Develop recommendations, translate into goals and actions, and create implementation guidance.
- **Approvals:** Public hearings for final approvals.

RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING PLANS

Existing planning documents provide context and guidance for the growth and development of Anchorage and Government Hill. The goals, objectives, and strategies from existing plans also informed the development of the Government Hill Neighborhood Parks and Trails Plan. Reflecting on existing plans ensures that the community vision for park and trail goals also reflect the larger framework of community development.

1997 Areawide Trails Plan

The *Areawide Trails Plan* guides agencies in the establishment of trails throughout the Municipality. The plan depicts a potential multi-use paved trail system encircling the Government Hill bluff. Some of the segments, like the West Bluff Trail, already exist as a soft-surface trail. Some parts of this route are sidewalks (E Bluff Dr.) Some are based on routes used historically in the neighborhood. For example, a pedestrian crossing provided a route over E Loop Rd. between Sunset and Harvard Parks. It was damaged in the 1964 earthquake and removed.

2006 Anchorage Park Plan

The *Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resources, and Recreation Facility Plan* (Park Plan) provides a systematic approach for the planning of parks, natural use areas, and recreation within the Anchorage Bowl. As defined by the Park Plan, the classifications of parks in Government Hill include neighborhood use parks, special use areas, and natural resource areas.

2022 Anchorage Non-Motorized Plan

This plan guides development of the non-motorized network to help residents travel safely and efficiently throughout the Anchorage area and merges bicycle, pedestrian, and shared use pathways planning efforts simultaneously. As Anchorage multi-use trails are considered part of this network, there are natural overlap in goals among this plan, the Park Plan, and the *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan*.

A bicycle facility connecting Government Hill to downtown is rated as medium priority in the Non-Motorized Plan Downtown Corridor. The recommendation describes a separated bike path on C Street across Ship Creek, continuing to Ocean Dock Rd. and connecting to E Loop Rd., diverting the current bridge route. The plan also describes lower-priority pedestrian corridors in the eastern Government Hill residential area.

Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan + Anchorage 2040 Land Use Plan

The *Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan* serves as a framework for the *2040 Anchorage Land Use Plan*, which serves as the main guiding document for land use and development in the Municipality of Anchorage. The plan recommends development strategies within the scope of anticipated population change and considers recommendations of existing neighborhood and district plans, such as the *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan*.

RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING PLANS

Anchorage's Four Original Neighborhoods 2015 Interpretive Plan

The *2015 Interpretive Plan* intends to support the implementation of interpretive and educational projects in Government Hill, Downtown, South Addition, and Fairview. It includes best practices and recommendations for interpretive topics that could be featured around the neighborhood.

2013 Historic Preservation Plan

The *Historic Preservation Plan* for Anchorage's Four Original Neighborhoods addresses preservation and management of historic resources in the areas of Government Hill, Downtown, South Addition, and Fairview. Some of the most valuable landmarks identified by the community through this plan's public outreach process include the Brown's Point Cottages, Alaska Engineering Commission Cottages, Alaska Railroad Duplexes, Quonset huts, Water Tower, and the Wireless Building. The plan also emphasizes the historic use of the neighborhood for connectivity and transportation. A relevant goal for Government Hill is to "maintain and enhance safety of existing historic trails, and improve connections to Downtown, Coastal Trail, and [Anchorage's] open space network."

2013 Government Hill Neighborhood Plan

The Anchorage Assembly approved the *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan* in February 2013. The Neighborhood Plan serves as an element of the Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan and describes development goals to improve quality of life and economic vitality for Government Hill. Parks and recreational assets are recognized in the Neighborhood Plan; the *Parks and Trails Plan* seeks to create a more focused road map for park planning and capital improvements.

2017 Government Hill Commons Master Plan (draft)

In order to capture a 3-5 year outlook for desired improvements to the Government Hill Commons, this plan was developed by the Government Hill Commons, Inc. and Corvus Designs with substantial public involvement. The Parks and Recreation Commission supported the draft plan through a resolution in 2017 with an understanding that implementation of proposed improvements may require Parks and Recreation Staff and Commission approvals based on Title 21 regulatory code.



Above: Illustrated cover of the *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan*.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement was facilitated by Parks and Recreation in collaboration with the Government Hill Community Council and an Advisory Group. The planning team organized public meetings to collect feedback on park improvement projects from a variety of stakeholders and park users.



Advisory Group

A team of 10 Government Hill community members formed an Advisory Group to assist with plan development throughout the process. These stakeholders met five times to represent different interests and user groups, review plan materials, and help the planning team interpret public feedback.

Virtual Open House

To accommodate a safe group discussion during the ongoing pandemic, the planning team hosted a virtual group open house to provide another forum for plan input. A main discussion topic was the desire for safe non-motorized connectivity, both to Ship Creek Trail/Downtown and across the neighborhood over E Loop Rd. Another topic that came up multiple times was ensuring play equipment met the needs of a wider range of ages and interests.

Open House

14 participants attended an open house at the Government Hill Elementary School in February 2023.



Above: Example flyer posted for community outreach.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT PARKS + TRAILS IN GOV'T HILL?

Major reason why we chose to live here, but not to say there isn't room to improve it.

Greenbelts are recreational, but also serve as a buffer from the industrial activities

WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE NEED FROM PARKS + TRAILS?

New playground equipment should be for a RANGE of ages, enjoyable by all.

Bike access to recreation facilities, and what's the appeal/what's the draw? Need to factor in the fun and how the kids can get there.

GOVERNMENT HILL PARKS AND TRAILS ARE IMPORTANT BECAUSE....

GHill is valuable. It encourages people to get out and just go. How many people can do a 3 mile trail walk outdoors in the middle of an urban area?

Health benefits, can contribute to food security concerns, increases health equity

I can't say how many people & neighbors we meet in the parks. Out walking, or exercising their dogs, and people out for walks or runs. Community Happens Here.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PARK AND WHY?

I love the creative play element of Susan Nightingale McKay. My child was always into storytelling and make believe

Walk from Sunset Park east through the old growth, up the hill and at the top the view of the Chugach. Need to preserve this.

Susan Nightingale Park is a favorite - the inclusive aspects and age range the playground accommodates is a big plus. End up running between SK and the GHill elementary school playground to enjoy age-appropriate opportunities.

Harvard, Sunset are favorites.

Brown Point's viewshed of downtown, Inlet and Chugach needs to be preserved

WHAT TYPES OF CHANGES OR IMPROVEMENTS WOULD YOU MAKE?

Disparities in access and distribution to green space was apparent looking at the density maps. We should give focus and consideration to those residents who would likely benefit the most.

Opportunities for adolescents and the younger kids need to be expanded

Greenhouses, community gardens used to be by high density apartments, there an opportunity to support or encourage growth into our parks?

I am in support of using green space for gardens to address food security and create healthy learning opportunities. I know there are a number of garden beds already around the neighborhood (Neighborworks has some, North Pointe apartments have some), and the Commons plays that role somewhat too, at least on the healthy learning side. Given the availability of garden beds already, I don't see an urgent need for a major new garden space. But as we're thinking long term, I think gardens should be at least referenced in the plan.

Challenges in making the connections: boundaries are small and private property owners will likely need to be negotiated with to expand parks facilities there.

Connectivity to other trail system - Ship Creek is so close (though challenging to get to no doubt). Right now connections outside of GHill is difficult and dangerous

East Bluff trail is currently an out and back and it would be great as a loop around the whole neighborhood

Need a safe connection from the East to the West. In the 1960s there used to be a pedestrian bridge. The bridge by the military gate just isn't used and crossing the highway bridge can be quite dangerous.

East-west connection would support kids going to school too

Connect and ease access to the East Bluff Trails, potential planning about routing the trail up from where it is now could be of concern for our organization but should be investigated. We would like to see an actual path up but specific location/alignment could be a piece of concern - Adam Alexander

Only place I don't feel 'safe' is the stop light intersection, I try to avoid it.

Connections - we need more and better connections that facilitate safer recreation/travel. East to West travel and connections should be enhanced.

"We're the connection bridge gets broken down by a 'during the winter' I personally have better" (connecting to an existing bridge by State)

Agree, the stop light is a scary spot for pedestrians, especially on the west side approach where there is no sidewalk, no shoulder (especially in winter), and the very close secondary intersection with Harvard creating many hazards.

MISCELLANEOUS / QUESTIONS

Label the "Business Center" on the map

Will the Park's Plan have the same significance as the Neighborhood Plan? Van - YES!

Who is the final approver of this plan? Van - PR Commission - PZC final approval by public hearing

Is the neighborhood Park Plan going to include the potential impacts of Knik Arm Bridge Phase 1 and 2? Concerned that the Parks Plan won't take this into consideration and have the plan be very short sighted. PZC does impact existing parks (Sunset)

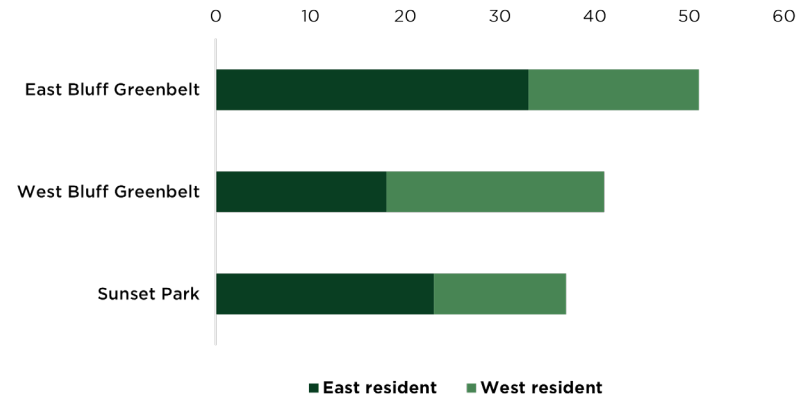
Survey

An online survey was developed and advertised at the same time as the virtual open house. The survey intended to capture a big-picture understanding of community priorities for park and trail improvements and confirm ideas brought up during Advisory Group meetings.

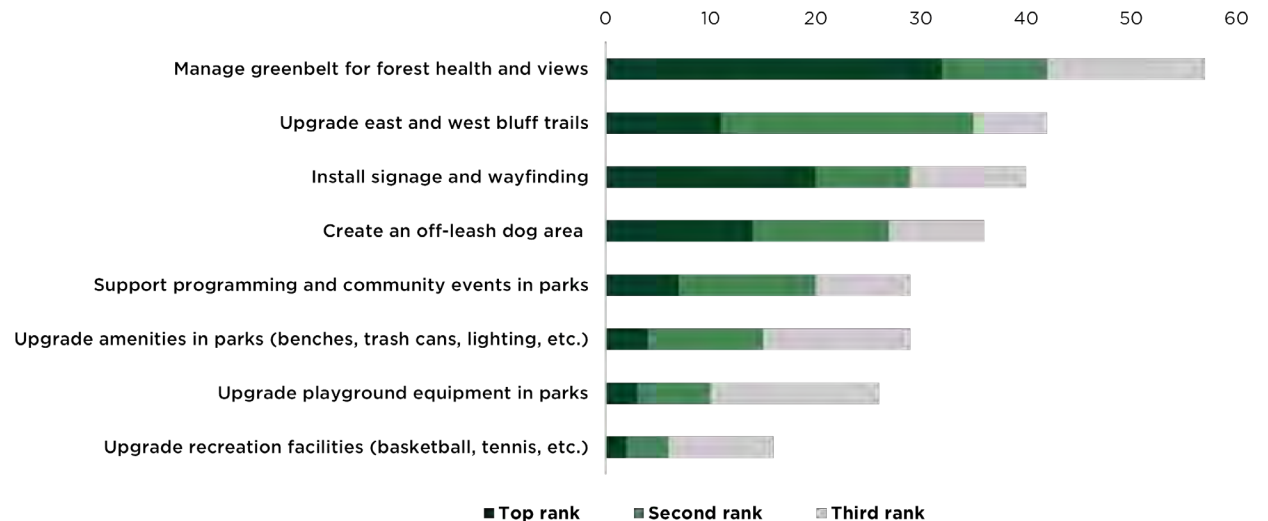
112 Anchorage residents filled out the survey, the majority being residents of Government Hill. When asked to rank their top three choices of parks to improve in the future, 51 people included the East Bluff Greenbelt, 41 included the West Bluff Greenbelt, and 37 included Sunset Park. Sunset Park and the East Bluff Greenbelt were also among the most frequently visited parks.

When asked to rank their interest in park projects, respondents demonstrated an interest in managing the greenbelt for forest health and views (42 responses/38% ranked this in the top two). Other top-ranked projects included upgrading the east and west bluff trails, installing kiosks and signage, and creating an off-leash dog area.

Top ranked parks for improvement



Top ranked projects



SITE ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT



COMMON THEMES



Government Hill Commons is the Neighborhood Centerpiece

The Commons are both a destination and a transition point between the East and West neighborhoods.



Neighborhood Residents Feel Safe at Parks and on Trails

Residents can travel safely between areas of the neighborhood and parks are secure for all ages.



The Government Hill Greenbelt is a String of Pearls

Parks form a natural buffer encircling Government Hill. Trail users desire a seamless transition across the East and West Bluffs.



The Greenbelt Promotes Scenic Views, Recreation, and Forest Health

Trails allow people to enjoy scenic views and remain consistent with existing natural resource plans.



Parks and Trails Celebrate and Embody the Neighborhood Character

Government Hill's historic character and the unique East and West neighborhood identities should inform future design standards, wayfinding, and new parks or existing park improvements.

Champion the Government Hill Neighborhood Plan

Leverage the 2013 Neighborhood Plan to accomplish park and trail projects and form strategic partnerships.



Improve Access and Connections to Areas Outside Government Hill

Improve bike and pedestrian access to downtown, Ship Creek, and other destinations.



Consider Other Properties as Opportunity Sites for Parks

The defense fuels site and old wireless building are potential assets that could serve as future public spaces or interpretive destinations.



Collaborate with Partners to Achieve Park + Trail Goals

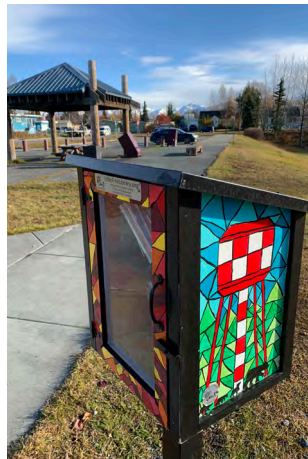
Community grants, Youth Employment in Parks (YEP), housing non-profits, neighboring land owners, and Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS) offer resources for goal advancement.



Parks for the Next 100 Years

Ensure parks are formally dedicated to allow these to remain as community assets for the next 100 years and more.





4

Parks and Trails: Tomorrow

OVERVIEW

Parks and trails improve quality of life in Government Hill and will continue to offer a variety of recreational opportunities to residents over the next 100 years and beyond. This plan seeks to guide development and improvement of parks, trails, and recreation at the neighborhood level. This chapter is organized into three focus areas: ***Neighborhood-Wide Goals, Greenbelt Recommendations, and Park Recommendations.***

GOVERNMENT HILL PARKS + TRAILS PLAN GOALS



1

Take care of existing assets



2

Add wayfinding, signage, and amenities throughout parks and trails



3

Expand year-round recreational opportunities



4

Manage greenbelt forest health



5

Improve non-motorized connections to parks and trails



6

Develop recreational uses at opportunity sites

OVERVIEW, *CONTINUED*

Throughout the three focus areas, recommendations are further categorized as *clean-and-green* or *capital improvements*:

- **Clean-and-green projects** are low-cost maintenance items or amenity improvements that could be accomplished in partnership with volunteers, the Government Hill Community Council, and Anchorage Parks and Recreation. The Community Council compiled a list and resolution capturing many of these clean-and-green ideas in 2019 in anticipation of the plan development process (see Appendix C).
- **Capital improvements** refer to larger upgrades or improvements that require bond funds, grants, or other major funding sources.

This structure intends to capture the desired future conditions of parks and trails in Government Hill. The ideas presented reflect community-identified themes and seek to resolve issues and concerns. The recommendations are further shaped by department and landowner standards and best practices. The goals captured in this plan are expected to be refined through continued community partnership during plan implementation.

Goal 1

NEIGHBORHOOD-WIDE GOALS

Goals in this section are intentionally broad and speak to the entire neighborhood park and trail system rather than specific sites. They are numbered for clarity and not to reflect priority. Recommendations provide an action plan for implementation.

Take care of existing park and recreation assets

This plan outlines attainable action items to care for existing amenities and facilities in parks and along trails. Improvement ideas and larger capital needs are captured for each park area in the *Park Recommendations* and *Greenbelt Recommendations* sections.

Recommendations:

- Implement clean-and-green and deferred maintenance projects in partnership with the Government Hill Community Council, volunteers, and the Parks and Recreation Department.



Existing playground at Sunset Park

Goal 2

Add lighting, wayfinding, and amenities throughout parks and trails

Signage and park amenities should be upgraded and added throughout the park and trail system to improve safety and usability. Wayfinding and signage are also included as goals throughout the *Neighborhood Plan*. In general, park signage and amenity upgrades should be consistent with municipal and departmental standards, as this eases maintenance costs and helps signal where public spaces are within the neighborhood. Interpretive signs can add local context and honor the historic character of Government Hill. The *Greenbelt* and *Park Recommendations* sections show more specifically where amenity upgrades could occur.

Recommendations:

- **Amenities:** Ensure trailheads and parks have appropriate amenities to support users, like benches, bollards, bear-proof trash bins, charcoal deposit bins, and Mutt Mitt stations.
- **Lighting:** Add lighting in parks where necessary to improve safety and year-round use.
- **Wayfinding:** Install wayfinding signs and kiosks at priority locations using departmental standards and installation guidelines.
- **Park signs:** Replace wooden park signs with modern metal signage.
- **Interpretive signage:** Add historic signage and Indigenous placename monuments that celebrate the character of Government Hill. Some recommendations may already be captured in the *2015 Interpretive Plan for Anchorage's Four Original Neighborhoods*.



Goal 3

Expand year-round recreation opportunities in Government Hill

An ideal Government Hill park and trail system provides a variety of year-round, close-to-home recreational opportunities.¹

Recommendations:

- **Expand winter activities:** Broaden the options for winter recreation in parks through improvements such as maintaining groomed ski loops or developing an outdoor ice rink.
- **Upgrade and diversify play equipment:** Accommodate a wider range of ages and abilities by upgrading play equipment, especially in the neighborhood's east side where equipment is aging. Upgrades should be accomplished by engaging youth, childcare program managers, and apartment managers and residents.
- **Develop off-leash dog area:** Off-leash dog areas are popular, well-loved resources across Anchorage. The Defense Fuels Site, if transferred to park management, fits departmental standards and the community's desire for the development of an off-leash dog area.²
- **Consider a recreation or sports facility:** Future planning of a recreation center should weigh the costs of development with population density, accessibility, demand for facilities, and the condition and anticipated future use or vacancy of the existing Curling Club facility.



1. Community gardens were addressed as an opportunity in the Neighborhood Plan; however, based on existing garden space at the Government Hill Commons and near apartment complexes, this did not emerge as a priority.

2. The *Dog Park Suitability Study* completed for the Abbott Loop community provides a department standard for establishing dog parks based on available area, the natural environment, and surrounding land use.

Goal 4

Manage greenbelt forest health

The Government Hill Greenbelt should continue to serve as a trail corridor and recreational asset. Additionally, homeowners expressed during this planning process that scenic views over the greenbelt are an integral part of the neighborhood's character. Viewshed management is also memorialized in the *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan*.

Establishing shared management guidelines will help preserve viewsheds for park and trail users, expand recreation opportunities, and manage forest health throughout the greenbelt in a way that is consistent with community values. Forest management practices will need to meet landowner conditions outlined in the existing Alaska Railroad lease agreement.

Recommendations:

- Establish a public-private forest management partnership between East Bluff homeowners, the Alaska Railroad, and Parks and Recreation with the goal to improve viewsheds, promote recreational access, and protect forest health.
- Create a greenbelt forest management plan that is consistent with landowner agreements and the *Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan*.
- Manage invasive vegetation throughout the greenbelt.



Goal 5

Improve non-motorized connections to parks and trails

A quality system of parks and trails includes opportunities for non-motorized connectivity between parks, homes, and everyday destinations. Two missing connections are between the East and West Greenbelts across E Loop Rd., and between the neighborhood and Ship Creek Trail/downtown. Collaboration across government agencies can ensure future park upgrades support desired bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Recommendations:

- Ensure that future park, trail, and recreation projects support safe non-motorized transportation throughout the neighborhood and to destinations outside of Government Hill.
- Continue to advocate for non-motorized improvements using recommendations in the *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan*.



Work across agencies to advance recreational uses of opportunity sites

Goal 6

Undeveloped land in Government Hill presents an opportunity to expand access to recreation and fill gaps in the neighborhood system of greenspace. Parks and Recreation will first need to acquire long-term park management and maintenance authority in order to implement recreational goals on these properties.

Defense Fuels Site

The community has worked with the Port of Alaska to establish recreational use of parcel #002-021-50-00, referred to in this plan as the Defense Fuels site.

A focus of ongoing conversations on the redevelopment of this site has been to maintain a greenbelt buffer separating industrial overflow in the lowland area from recreational use in the upper bench section. A security fence currently borders the parcel. The upper bench area is highlighted on the map below.

Recommendations:

- Continue meeting with landowners to acquire park management authority.
- Create a site plan for the upper bench dog park area in collaboration with neighborhood residents.
- Remove or relocate security fence and develop fenced off-leash area.

East Neighborhood

The leased area of the East Bluff Greenbelt was most recently extended by the Alaska Railroad in 2007. In efforts to continue extending the greenbelt buffer, the community has researched two undeveloped parcels east of the North Pointe bluff housing development. The first is owned by Heritage Land Bank (HLB) (003-041-97-000) and the second is being transferred to HLB (003-041-95-000).

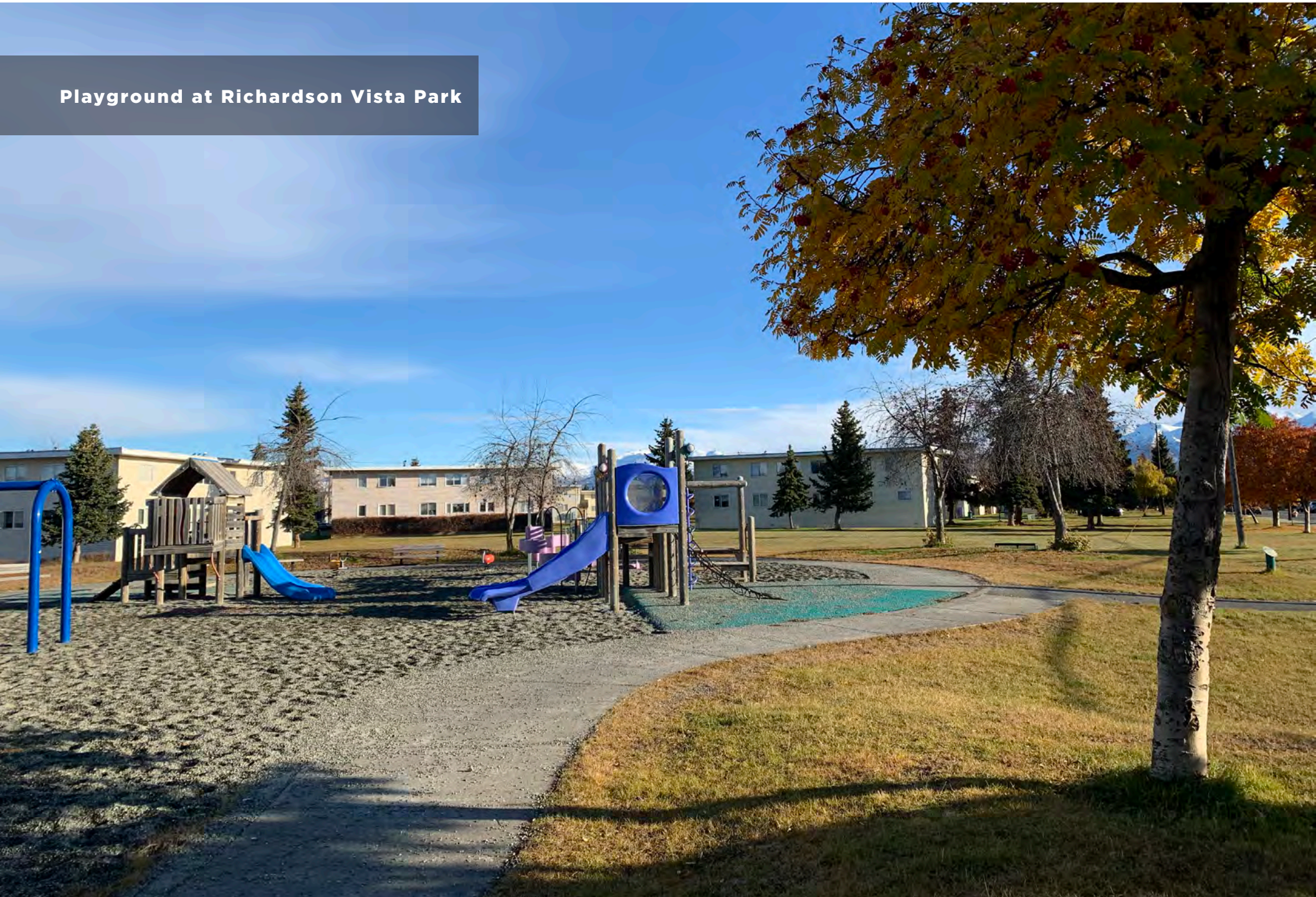
This undeveloped land is close to a diverse, densely populated part of the neighborhood and could offer panoramic views of Ship Creek and the Chugach Mountains with established recreational access. Unidentified ownership and proximity to the JBER boundary are two potential barriers to park development.

Recommendations:

- Research land ownership and feasibility of recreational use in this area.



Playground at Richardson Vista Park



GREENBELT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government Hill Greenbelt serves both as a natural buffer from surrounding industry and a recreational trail corridor. As the Greenbelt is owned by the Alaska Railroad, any recreational improvements require continued partnership with the landowner. Forest management guidelines for the greenbelt should include recommendations to protect forest health, improve recreational access, and provide scenic views for trail users in Government Hill.

West Bluff Greenbelt



Walking around Government Hill's west side offers a glimpse into the founding of Anchorage. The West Bluff Greenbelt trail, which follows historically-used routes, was improved in 2019 through a Recreational Trails Program grant and partnership with Youth Employment in Parks. Adding wayfinding, amenities, and signage will encourage safe and sustainable use of the trail in the future.

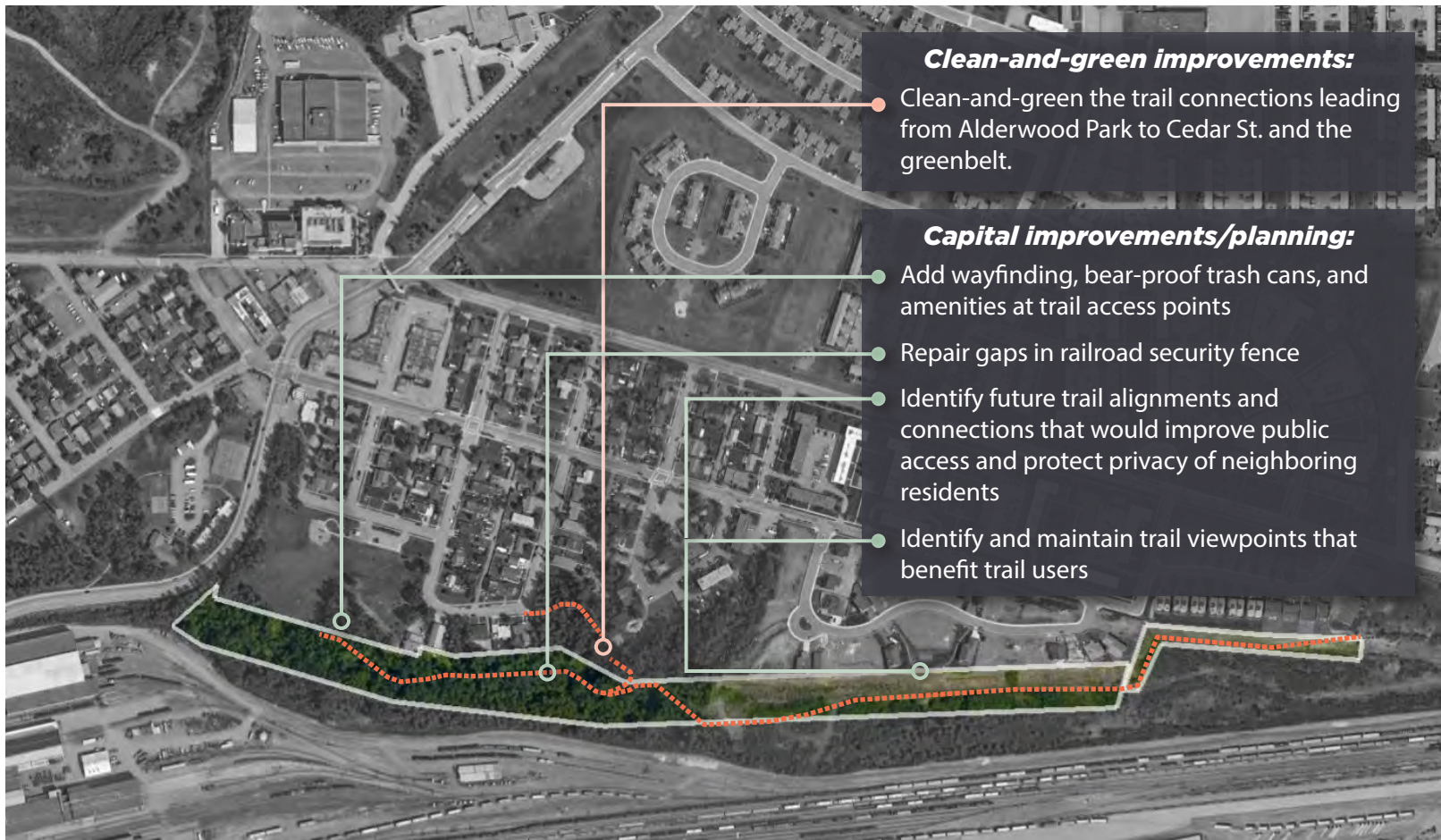


GREENBELT RECOMMENDATIONS

East Bluff Greenbelt



The neighborhood's east side is distinguished by a higher density of housing, a modern street grid, and expansive views of the Chugach Mountains. Improving the East Bluff Greenbelt trail by adding wayfinding, amenities, and access points will ensure the community can sustainably access recreation and viewsheds. The West Bluff Trail project serves as a strong precedent for improving this trail, which traverses the bluff in less than one mile.



PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

Al Miller Memorial Park



Al Miller Memorial Park offers a quiet greenspace to have a picnic or relax. The park is in generally good condition, and most improvements could be accomplished with volunteer support.

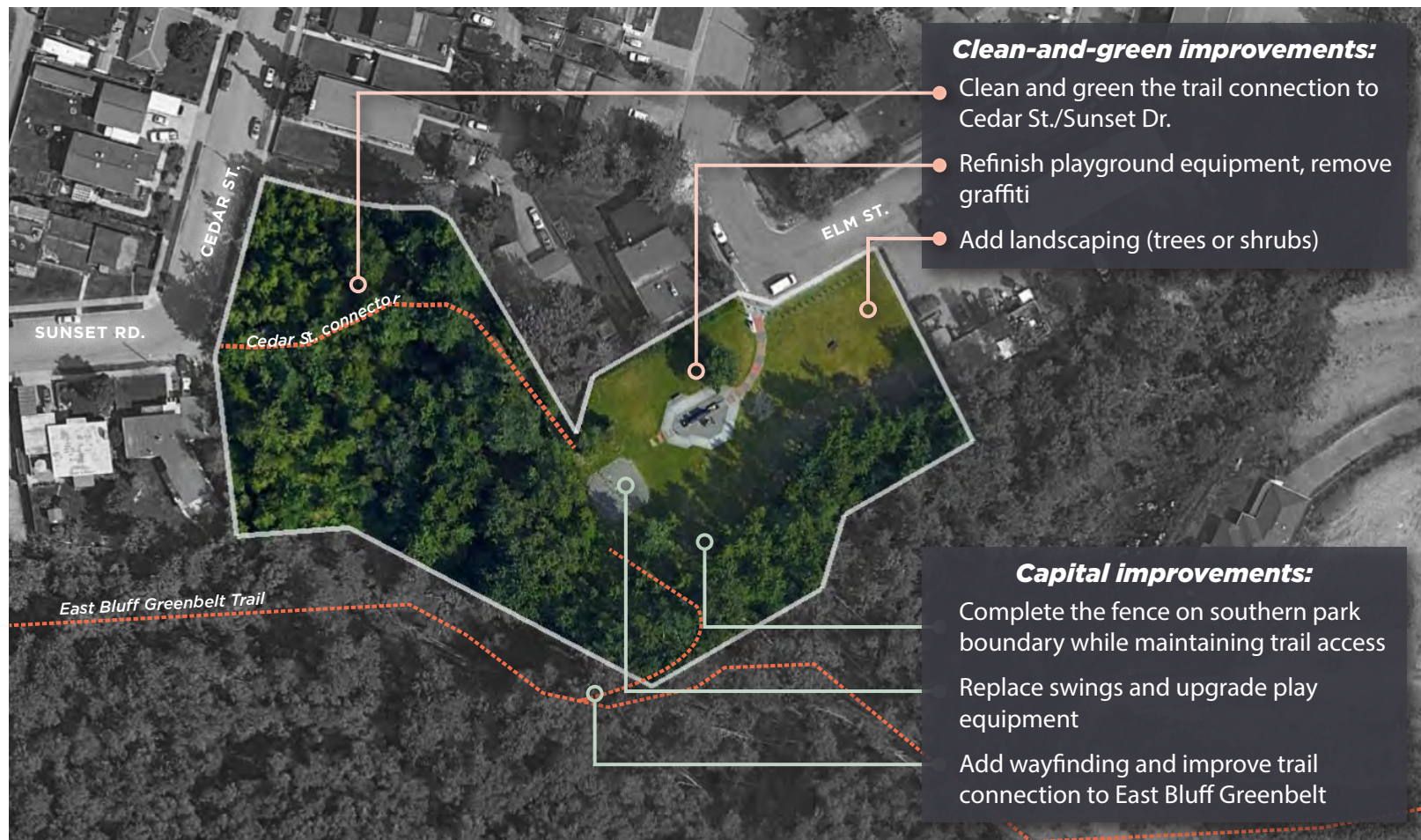


PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

Alderwood Park



The train-themed play equipment and swings at this park are well-utilized, but aging and in need of repair. An open lawn leaves room for landscaping improvements. This park also provides a scenic walking route for neighbors and provides access to the East Bluff Greenbelt.



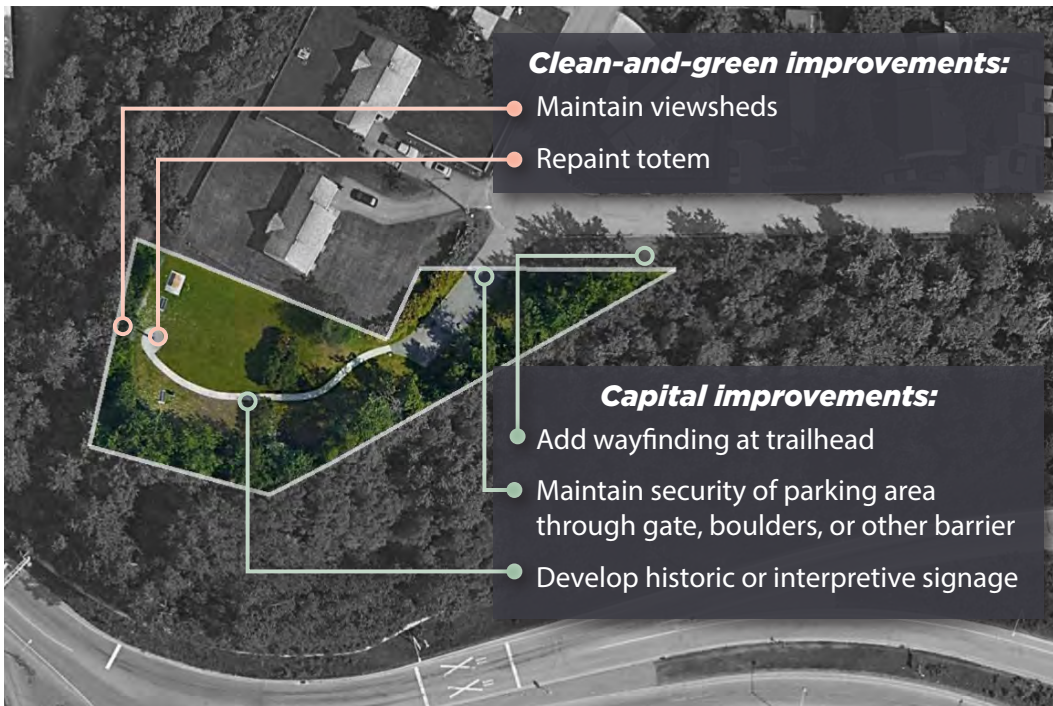
PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

Brown's Point Park



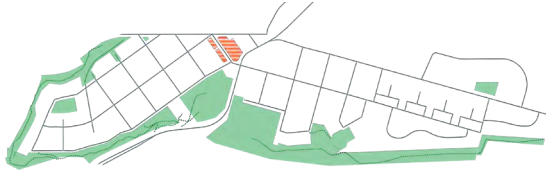
Brown's Point Park provides serene open space, views of Cook Inlet and downtown, and trail access to the West Bluff Greenbelt. Adding wayfinding at the trailhead will improve trail visibility and safety.

Cunningham Park

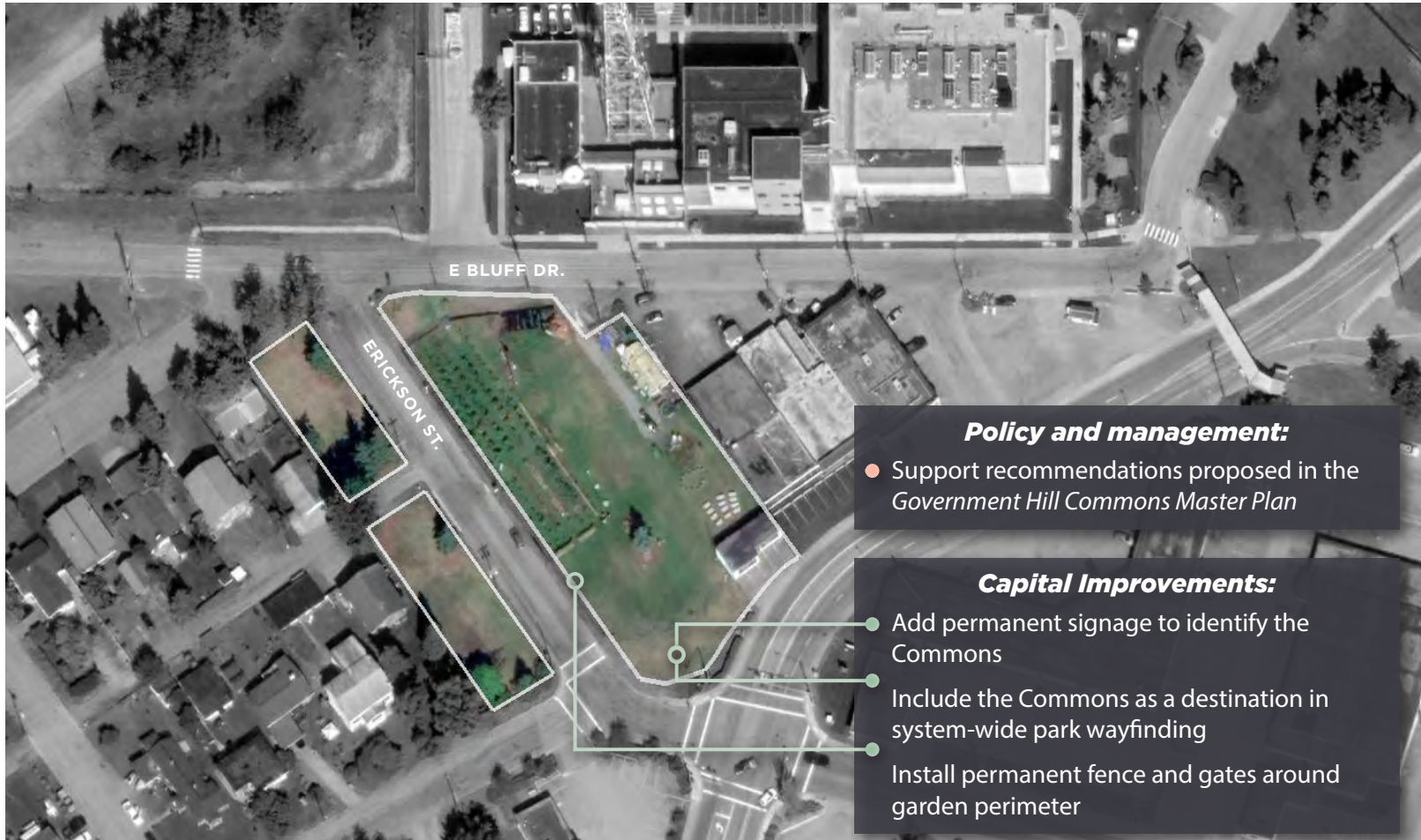


PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

Government Hill Commons



The Commons add value to the neighborhood and Anchorage park system. The draft *Government Hill Commons Master Plan* identifies specific development priorities for the space as it becomes destination for residents and larger community events.



PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

Harvard Park



Harvard Park serves as a hub of recreation and sports facilities for the neighborhood and Anchorage. Short-term projects include improving landscaping and the tennis court playing surface. In the long-term, the curling facility is aging and undersized for the aspirations of the Anchorage Curling Club.

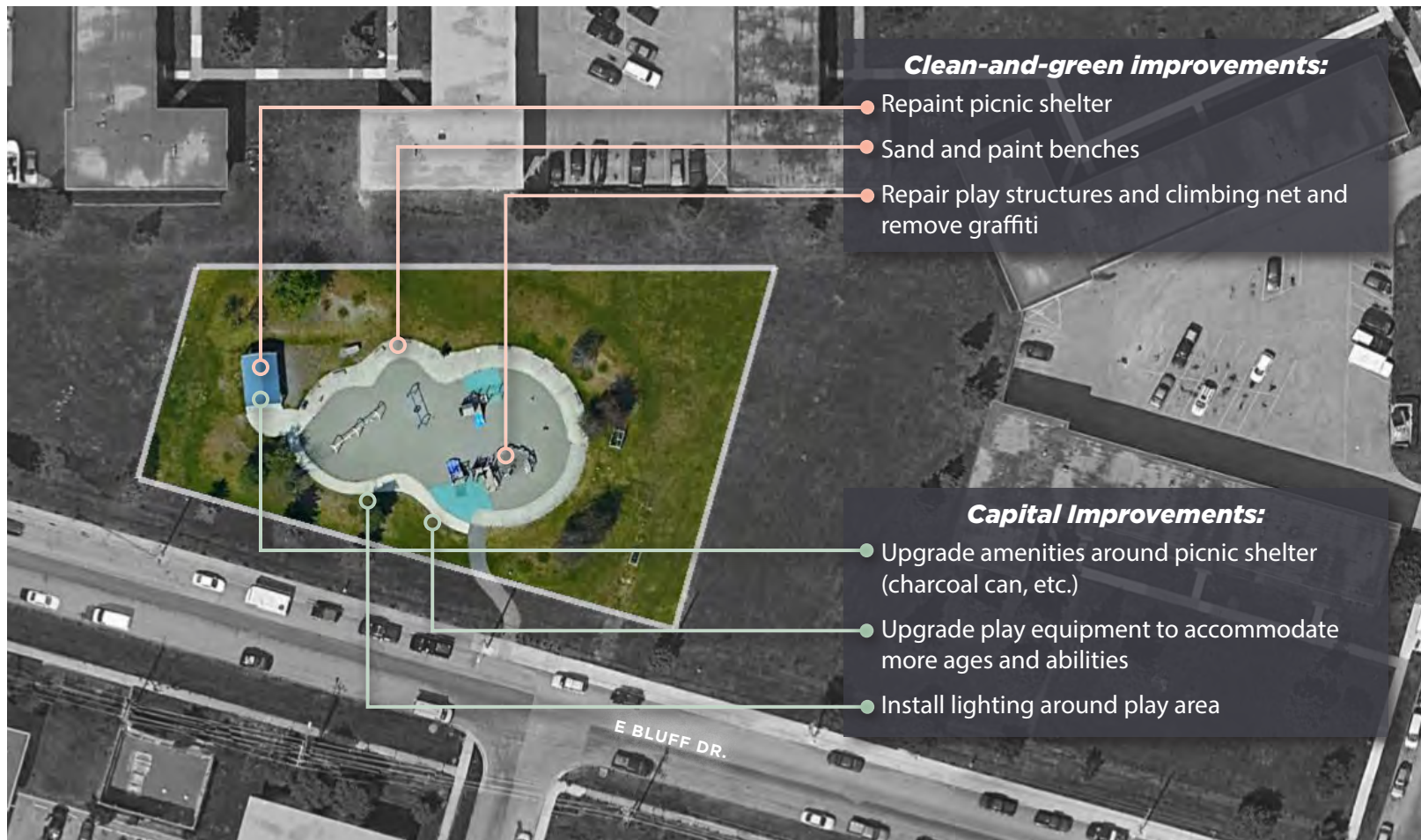


PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

Richardson Vista Park



Richardson Vista Park serves the most populated and diverse area of Government Hill. The play equipment and picnic shelter are aging and need improvements to accommodate more users. This site is a good candidate for a focused site planning effort to create an east side destination play area.



Clean-and-green improvements:

- Repaint picnic shelter
- Sand and paint benches
- Repair play structures and climbing net and remove graffiti

Capital Improvements:

- Upgrade amenities around picnic shelter (charcoal can, etc.)
- Upgrade play equipment to accommodate more ages and abilities
- Install lighting around play area

PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

Sunset Park



Sunset Park is well-utilized by the community for gathering and recreation. Both clean-and-green and small capital projects could improve the park by restoring grassy areas, restoring water service functionality, and improving amenities around shelter area.



PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

Suzan Nightingale McKay Memorial Park



Suzan Nightingale McKay Memorial Park's inclusive play equipment is a destination for neighbors and families across Anchorage. Maintaining overgrown vegetation will restore iconic mountain and inlet views. Adding wayfinding at the trail access point can help orient users to the greenbelt. Minor upgrades are needed to some of the amenities and interpretive monuments in this park.





5

Implementation

OVERVIEW

This plan serves as a neighborhood-level road map and tool for the Government Hill Community Council to advance goals to improve the park and trail system. Parks and Recreation will seek approval from the Government Hill Community Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission in the final steps toward plan implementation.



FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

Capital Improvement Program

The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is the primary planning and budgeting tool to identify desired public facilities and capital improvements over a six-year cycle. The Government Hill Community Council can use this tool to advocate for resources in support of park projects.

Municipal Park Bonds

Voter-supported park bonds are the primary funding mechanism for park improvement projects in Anchorage. Bonds passed between 2019 and 2022 included funding for Government Hill park improvements and planning efforts.

State and Federal Grants

Various federal and state funding sources can be directed toward park and trail improvement projects. One example is the Alaska Recreation Trails Program (RTP) grant acquired by the Government Hill Community Council to fund the West Bluff trail connection between Suzan Nightingale McKay and Brown's Point Park in 2019. Future federal infrastructure funding may become available for major capital improvement and trail connectivity projects.

Public-Private Partnerships

Strategic partnerships and collaboration are important strategies to move Government Hill toward their vision for a cohesive system of parks and trails. Volunteer match funding, like the Anchorage Park Foundation's Challenge Grant program, are proven models to make community-driven small capital improvements in Anchorage's parks.

Engaging volunteers is another effective way to raise awareness and support for larger park projects while also accomplishing clean-and-green items. The community may also seek partnership with surrounding landowners to achieve park and trail goals, like the Port of Alaska, Alaska Railroad, North Pointe Apartments, and NeighborWorks Alaska.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS (M.A.S.S)

Implementation of the goals and recommendations listed in the Plan must conform to construction standards established by the Municipality of Anchorage Standard Specifications (M.A.S.S).

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK: TITLE 21 LAND USE CODE

Title 21 guides on-site development, including required setbacks, landscaping, parking, allowable use, and dimensional standards. Some improvements may require additional review and approvals from other regulatory agencies, like the Urban Design Commission.

MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Park and trail improvements should incorporate design standards and amenities that increase ease of maintenance and management of resources. This includes tools to help keep parks clean, like Mutt Mitt stations and bear-proof trash bins. In Government Hill, some park maintenance and management policies are outlined by Cooperative Use and Lease Agreements established with landowners.

PROGRAMMING

Programming in Government Hill parks can serve neighbors and draw in residents from other neighborhoods. Drawing positive use to parks also discourages nefarious activity and creates a sense of community ownership in parks. Members of the public or community organizations can reserve picnic shelters and sports facilities for events and gatherings. The desire for community programs can also shape the physical design of parks. For example, the Government Hill Commons includes flexible space and seating that allows a variety of organizations to host events and activities in addition to serving as a community orchard.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

PARK OR SITE	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	ESTIMATED COSTS	IMPLEMENTING PARTNER*
SYSTEM-WIDE	Master Plan Approvals	\$6,000	Parks, GHCC, Advisory Group, Parks and Recreation Commission, Planning and Zoning Commission
	Fundraising for Improvements	TBD	Anchorage Park Foundation, Parks, GHCC, Residents
	Replace wooden park signs with metal	\$10,000 ea.	Parks
DEFENSE FUELS SITE #002-021-50-00	Acquire park management authority	TBD	Port of Alaska, MOA, Parks
	Create a site plan for the upper bench dog park	\$ 20 - 30,000	
	Remove or relocate security fence and develop dog park	\$50 - 100,000	
HERITAGE LAND BANK PARCEL #003-041-97-000	Research land ownership and feasibility of recreational use in these areas.	TBD	MOA, GHCC
PARCEL #003-041-95-000			
GREENBELT	Establish a public-private forest management partnership to improve viewsheds, promote recreational access, and protect forest health.	TBD	Alaska Railroad, Parks, Northpointe Bluff Homeowners
	Create a greenbelt forest management plan that is consistent with landowner agreements and the <i>Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan</i> .	TBD	
	Manage invasive vegetation throughout the greenbelt.	TBD	

PARK OR SITE	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	ESTIMATED COSTS	IMPLEMENTING PARTNER*
WEST BLUFF	Maintain existing viewsheds in accordance with landowner guidelines	Clean-and-green	Parks
	Add signage and wayfinding at main trail access points for navigation and safety (Suzan Nightingale McKay, Brown's Point, and Harvard Parks)	\$20-40,000	Parks
	Coordinate with Alaska Railroad to repaint water tower	TBD	Alaska Railroad, Volunteers
EAST BLUFF	Clean-and-green the trail connections leading from Alderwood Park to Cedar St. and the greenbelt	Clean-and-green	Parks, Volunteers
	Add wayfinding, bear-proof trash cans, and amenities at trail access points	\$20 - 40,000	Parks
	Repair gaps in railroad security fence	\$5,000	Alaska Railroad, Parks
	Identify future trail alignments and connections that would improve public access and protect privacy of neighboring residents	TBD	
	Identify and maintain trail viewpoints that benefit trail users	TBD	

PARK OR SITE	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	ESTIMATED COSTS	IMPLEMENTING PARTNER*
AL MILLER MEMORIAL PARK	Remove weeds from the picnic area	< \$10,000	Parks, Volunteers
	Add topsoil and seed to restore grass		
	Edge grass along north border of park		
	Remove downed brush and invasive species along south and east boundary		
	Remove underutilized skate rails		
	Repair seat wall		

PARK OR SITE	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	ESTIMATED COSTS	IMPLEMENTING PARTNER*
ALDERWOOD PARK	Clean and green the trail connection to Cedar St./Sunset Dr.	Clean-and-green Maintenance	Parks, Volunteers
	Repaint playground equipment, remove graffiti		
	Add landscaping (trees or shrubs)	\$10,000	Parks, Volunteers
	Complete the fence on southern park boundary	\$5,000	Parks, Alaska Railroad
	Replace swings, upgrade play equipment	\$400 - 500,000	
	Add wayfinding and improve trail connection to East Bluff Greenbelt	\$25 - \$50,000	
BROWN'S POINT PARK	Maintain viewsheds	Clean-and-green	Parks, Volunteers
	Repaint totem		
	Add wayfinding at trailhead	See West Bluff Greenbelt	

PARK OR SITE	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	ESTIMATED COSTS	IMPLEMENTING PARTNER*
GOVERNMENT HILL COMMONS	Support recommendations proposed in the Government Hill Commons Master Plan	Varies	Commons
	Add signage to identify the Commons	\$5 - 10,000	Commons, Parks
	Include the Commons as a destination in system-wide park wayfinding	n/a	Parks
	Install permanent moose fence and gate around garden perimeter	\$50 - 75,000	Commons, Parks

PARK OR SITE	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	ESTIMATED COSTS	IMPLEMENTING PARTNER*
HARVARD PARK	Manage vegetation and debris on path connecting to E Loop Rd.	Clean-and-green	GHCC, Parks
	Cut back hedges at west side of entrance to parking lot		
	Improve landscaping around flower bed		
	Repair damaged surface of tennis and basketball courts	\$150 - 200,000	Parks
	Fill hole on east side of Curling Club	TBD	Parks
	Improve parking lot drainage	TBD	Parks
	Consider facility renovation or relocation of Curling Club to meet user group needs	+ \$1 Million	Parks, MOA Facility Maintenance

PARK OR SITE	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	ESTIMATED COSTS	IMPLEMENTING PARTNER*
RICHARDSON VISTA PARK	Repaint picnic shelter	Clean-and-green Maintenance	GHCC, Parks
	Repaint playground equipment and remove graffiti		
	Sand and paint benches		
	Repair climbing net and play structures as needed		
	Upgrade picnic shelter amenities (charcoal deposit can, tables, etc.)	\$1 - 2,000	Parks
	Upgrade play equipment	\$400 - 500,000	Parks, Neighboring Residents
	Install lighting around play area	\$100,000	Parks

PARK OR SITE	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	ESTIMATED COSTS	IMPLEMENTING PARTNER*
SUNSET PARK	Clean and green brush and downed trees in forested areas	Clean-and-green Maintenance	Parks, Volunteers
	Repair/replace wooden park sign, bollards		
	Repaint benches and picnic tables		
	Repair picnic shelter roof beam water damage	TBD	Parks
	Restore water service functionality to support future gardens or landscaping	\$10 - 30,000	Parks
	Add topsoil and seed to restore grass	\$10,000	Parks
	Add trees or shrubs to soften the landscape		

PARK OR SITE	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	ESTIMATED COSTS	IMPLEMENTING PARTNER*
SUZAN NIGHTINGALE MCKAY MEMORIAL PARK	Repair/replace wooden park signs	Maintenance Clean-and-green	Parks
	Brush cutting and chipping at identified viewsheds		
	Add screening fence and relocate portable restroom	\$4 -5,000	Parks
	Add benches and charcoal deposit can near play and picnic area	\$1 - 2,000	Parks
	Replace damaged bollards near park access points	\$500 - \$1,000 each	Parks
	Replace scratched plaque at the Sydney Lawrence Memorial	TBD	Parks, Volunteers
	Upgrade fence around flower bed near Mavis and Howard Hancock Overlook	TBD	Parks, Volunteers
NON-MOTORIZED IMPROVEMENTS	Non-motorized connection to Ship Creek	+\$1 million	AMATS, MOA, Alaska Railroad, Neighborhood Plan
	Non-motorized connection across E Loop Rd.	+\$1 million	

* **PARTNERS**

PARKS = PARKS AND RECREATION

MOA = MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

AMATS = ANCHORAGE METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS

DOT = ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

GHCC = GOVERNMENT HILL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Appendix A: Park Property Information

Park	Classification	Parcel(s) and Legal Description	Zoning	Area	Dedication?
<i>Al Miller Memorial Park</i>	Special Use	002-032-40-000 NORTH ADDITION #7 BLK Y LT 6 002-032-41-000 NORTH ADDITION #7 BLK Y LT 5 002-032-42-000 NORTH ADDITION #7 BLK Y LT 4 002-032-43-000 NORTH ADDITION #7 BLK Y LT 3	R-2D	.95	Yes
<i>Alderwood Park</i>	Neighborhood Use	002-047-07-000 GOVERNMENT HILL BLK 15A LT 3 002-047-08-000 GOVERNMENT HILL BLK 15A LT 2B	R-2D / PLI-p	3.25	Partially
<i>Brown's Point Park</i>	Natural Resource Area	002-061-28-000 NORTH ADDITION NO 7 TR C LT 6 US SURVEY 3458	R-2D	.24	Yes
<i>Cunningham Park</i>	Not Classified	002-044-01-000 NORTH ADDITION #4 CITY PARK	R-2D	.05	Yes
<i>Government Hill Commons</i>	Not Classified	002-041-06-000 NORTH ADDITION BLK O LT 5A	B-1A	0.75	Not municipal parkland
<i>West Bluff - Government Hill Greenbelt</i>	Natural Resource Area	002-045-18-001 ARR 6332 SHIP CREEK CROSSING TRACT C PTN	PLI-P	10.22	No
<i>East Bluff - Government Hill Greenbelt</i>	Natural Resource Area		PLI-P	12.63	No
<i>Harvard Park</i>	Neighborhood Use		PLI	4.65	No
<i>Richardson Vista Park</i>	Neighborhood Use	003-011-01-000 T13N R3W SEC 8 N2SW4 PTN RICHARDSON VISTA	R-4	.86	No
<i>Sunset Park</i>	Neighborhood Use	002-046-20-000 GOVERNMENT HILL BLK 12B	PLI-p	5.45	Yes
<i>Suzan Nightingale McKay Memorial Park</i>	Neighborhood Use	002-032-66-000 MCKINLEY VIEW PARK TR A	PLI-p	1.36	Yes

















Appendix B: Open-Ended Survey Results

Q: What other park projects would you like to see included in the plan?

	Categories	# of mentions	Examples
A	Non-motorized connectivity	26	"Create pedestrian (and ski and bike) connectivity to small boat harbor, ship creek trail, and coastal trail without using the big A/C street overpass bridge."
B	New recreational opportunities	13	"More official access points to our East Bluff Greenbelt and trail upgrades," "Cross country ski loop," "Activities (like basketball, frisbee golf, etc) for older kids (age 12+) at Richardson Vista Park."
C	Adding park amenities	12	"More benches," "Better gates at the commons for winter access," "Historical markers and signage regarding the history of the neighborhood."
D	Preserving views	5	"Connecting trail system to include the east bluff area with an emphasis to maintain and preserve the incredible (but quickly disappearing) views of the inlet, downtown, the railyard, and the mountains."

Q: Do you have any other comments, questions or concerns regarding parks, trails, or recreation facilities in Government Hill?

	Categories	# of mentions	Examples
C	Park amenities, management, or maintenance	14	"I want the fencing that separates the railway from the residential areas to be kept for safety reasons." "Space for dogs would be great, and regular maintenance of the tennis and basketball courts"
D	Preserving views	13	"We enjoy visiting Government Hill in large part due to the access to expansive views." "Please keep the view for the bluff homes."
B	New recreational opportunities	12	"I wish we had a groomed ski trail, both classic and skate skiing." "Hockey rink in government hill, please!"
A	Non-motorized connectivity	6	"Government Hill needs safer access to the Coastal Trail and the Ship Creek trail."

What other park projects would you like to see included in the plan? (All Responses)	A	B	C	D
Cross country ski loop. A bridge connecting the east and west side of GH. A safer way to get to GH Elementary from the east side.				
Access to the pond on east bluff trail.				
Maintaining the view of the mountains along Northpointe Bluff - the trees in the summer are growing to a height that prevents views in the summertime. The trees need to be trimmed please.				
Trim the trees so that we can see the Inlet				
Invasive species eradication and maintenance efforts.				
More benches				
More dog poop garbage cans				
A groomed ski trail for skate skiing would be great.				
Connect East Bluff Trail to West Bluff trail for walking/hiking safely.				
Manage Greenbelt Views				
Better gates at the commons for winter access				
Create pedestrian (and ski and bike) connectivity to small boat harbor, ship creek trail, and coastal trail without using the big A/C street overpass bridge. Specifically pedestrian connectivity that brings you down from the west end of Harvard to the ocean dock rd/small boat harbor/ bridge restaurant/ fishing area without using the a street bridge. Currently this is an underutilized connection that requires pedestrians to walk on the off ramp access to the port. Technically the only pedestrian route off of Govt hill is to use the big A street bridge. This really cuts off the neighborhood from the amenities of ship creek. Using the big a street bridge sidewalk is intense with high speed traffic and trucks and doesn't provide access to ship creek.				
Hockey rink in government hill!				
connecting trail system to include the east bluff area with an emphasis to maintain and preserve the incredible (but quickly disappearing) views of the inlet, downtown, the railyard, and the mountains.				
Opening of bluff west of atnt with additional trails.				

What other park projects would you like to see included in the plan? (All Responses)	A	B	C	D
I would like to see bike paths included so as to give safe passage to the many children and students who have to cross Post Road to access the parks and their school on the opposite side of the road. I organize the bike to school events at the school and know most kids who bike to school prefer to bike across Post road under the pedestrian bridge than cross at the busier lighted intersection. Some ideas to ponder might be a bikeable bridge from Sunset to Harvard park over Post road, a covered picnic area at Nightingale park, a school crossing sign by the Taco King, a better bike path connecting Gov't Hill with the Coastal Trail and Ship creek trail, historical markers and signage regarding the history of the neighborhood and native culture.	●			●
1. Enhanced and preserved panoramic views from East and West Bluff trails and any parks where possible. 2. More playground equipment at Sunset park. 3. Activities (like basketball, frisbee golf, etc) for older kids (age 12+) at Richardson Vista Park to give those kids something positive to do while younger kids use the playground. This would also improve the playground for the younger kids. 4. Safe trail connection from West Bluff Trail to East Bluff Trail/Sunset Park 5. Any improvements to make Government Hill pedestrian/ walking/running/hiking/biking friendly. 6. SAFE pedestrian/biking connection down the hill and connecting with Ship Creek trail.	●	●	●	
Ship creek trail connector	●			
view maintenance		●		
Bike-friendly overpass that links the East Bluff trail to the West bluff trail to avoid the tragically dangerous Hollywood intersection for kids biking to school, and to avoid kids j-biking underneath the pedestrian bridge. This offers the GH Elementary afterschool cross-country running and skiing clubs an extended, safe trail to use.	●			
More benches				●
I would like a bike trail at the end of the east end to connect up to the coastal trail without having to go down to the Ship Creek area.	●			
I have a home on Northbluff Drive, which I purchased because of the view. The cottonwood trees between our home and the railroad station are beginning to block the view and it would be nice to clear some of those trees to maintain our property value.		●		
Some CIP/bond projects include replacing bollards with rock and tearing out pavement at Suzan Nightingale McKay Park.				●
If somehow we could get a walking/bike trail through the railroad area to downtown or connected into one of the creek trails.	●			
Connect to bike trail downtown, have safer pedestrian route to downtown, better park lighting	●			●
Ski trails, a bridge to cross East Loop road via bike/ski to access a longer ski/bike trail, dissuade homeless camps between AKRR and Sunset Park; improve rec facilities for teens	●		●	
Inclusive park playground upgrades. Multi-use trail connections to the Ship Creek Trail (safer way to access it from Loop Rd).	●		●	

What other park projects would you like to see included in the plan? (All Responses)	A	B	C	D
Community use of land where the square dance hall stood. Additional basketball amenities in various parks given their popularity.			●	
The west bluff greenbelt expanded to run farther along/through the railroad owned land. Maybe all the way towards the Boniface gate.			●	
Restroom facilities				●
Management of the East Bluff Green belt for access and views. Removal of the dangerous and broken metal fencing in the East Bluff Greenbelt.		●		●
Dog Park for off leash Bike trail connection through JBER	●		●	
1) Install a permanent moose fence on the commons. 2) Complete the neighborhood Safety Buffer/Green Belt by extending it into the old Defense Fuels site. 2) link the east and west side bluff trail systems by rebuilding the old pedestrian bridge that used to span over loop Road next to the Curling Club.	●		●	●
Greenbelts will attract vagrants if they are not cleaned out better than they are now.				●
Moving the fence on East Bluff to the actual property line so we can access and develop trails in the much larger area than is now available to us.			●	
Better lighting at all parks				●
Repaint the totem pole in Brown point park Have a forester come out and mark the Bird Cherry, so residents can remove it.				●
Increased walking trails, refurbish totem pole, refurbish water tower and improve park benches			●	●
Connection to ship creek trail and/or coastal trail.	●			
Connection to the ship creek and coastal trails	●			
Connect trail system with Coastal Trail and Ship Creek trail	●			
1. Connecting E. and W. Bluff trails. 2. Designating the old Defense Fuels site for municipal park use and using part of it to complete a loop trail that circumnavigates the entire neighborhood. 3. Use the community orchard for performances, local events, and gatherings.	●			

What other park projects would you like to see included in the plan? (All Responses)	A	B	C	D
Connect the East and West Bluff Greenbelts with a overpass ramp bridge over East Bluff Loop Road. It is tragically dangerous for kids to cross their bikes at the intersection of Hollywood & East Loop. Kids also illegally ride their bikes under the pedestrian cross walk beside the military entrance to avoid the situation at the intersection, yet that is equally as dangerous! With the hundreds of cars backed up turning left to drop kids off at school after the intersection, that area is just as dangerous as the intersection. The GH principal and teachers have tried but cannot stop kids riding their bikes across the street. Also, East Bluff is not the same socio-economic status as West Bluff. East will greatly benefit for a greenbelt to bike/jog/run/ski trail that is as well maintained as the West Bluff.	●		●	
East bluff viewshed park		●		
An easier access / connection of trails to circle the hill. Also, to create a park area on the furthest eastern point of GH, currently HLB tract owned	●		●	
I would like t to see increased trail connectivity to downtown for bike commuters.	●			
Connect Gov Hill to city trail system	●			
Connection of the trails to circumnavigate Government, and a safe way to cross E. Loop road. The traffic signal area is dangerous and the metal pedestrian bridge is awkward and slippery.	●			
Graspers left around the garbage cans to help pick up the trash.				●
Upgrade Harvards Park to a more fully fleshed-out winter and summer sports facility, featuring an Olympic-class curling club.			●	
Bridging the Government Hill parks and trails with the Ship Creek Trail.	●			
I would like to see an improved trail connection between the east and west side of the neighborhood, especially between Sunset Park and Harvard Park. The Hollywood/Erickson intersection is especially bad for pedestrians, with no sidewalk on the western side (most people end up cutting through the Subway parking lot since there's otherwise nowhere to walk) and often overgrown vegetation impairing drivers from seeing those waiting to cross.	●			
Just use the resources wisely				
Thinning trees and /or creating "view holes" while not mowing down all the trees would be nice.		●		
More official access points to our East Bluff Greenbelt and trail upgrades.			●	
Playground equipment in Harvard park. Clean up, repave and maintain sunset park including new equipment. Alderwood park needs new swings and picnic tables. Alderwood park gets used everyday by residents and daycares.			●	●
Count:	26	5	13	12

Do you have any other comments, questions or concerns regarding parks, trails, or recreation facilities in Government Hill? (All Responses)	A	B	C	D
Maintaining the views from the bluff		●		
The homeowners on the Bluff need help ASAP to take down the tall trees on an annual basis. The City helped create the subdivision because of the view and we should be allowed to maintain that view. Thanks!		●		
minimize cottonwood		●		
None				
Historical placards or signage installed through the neighborhood would be nice to enhance the understanding of the communities place in Alaska statehood and Anchorage development.			●	
I wish we had a groomed ski trail, both classic and skate skiing.			●	
I really appreciate the lawn mowing that is done along Hollywood Drive on the east end.				●
We enjoy visiting Government Hill in large part due to the access to expansive views.		●		
Please keep the view for the bluff homes.		●		
Need to better manage Greenbelt forests and views.		●		
please maintain our views so that our home values don't plunge!		●		
Please keep our views as it will keep our home values as high as possible.		●		
I think our neighborhood is beautiful!				
The view from Harvard Ave of the Chugach, downtown, Ship Creek, and the inlet is mostly obscured now from cottonwood growth. Perhaps there could be some selective thinning to give all the people that walk and bike along Harvard access to the nice views? This could be done in conjunction with a greater forest Heath management plan so other aspects of forest management could be addressed too. Parks on Govt Hill are such an asset! Thank you!		●		
Hockey rink in government hill, please!			●	
I know that there would be plenty of people who live on the east bluff who would volunteer to help facilitate the objectives spelled out above.				
It would be really nice to have basketball court/hoop on the East side of the neighborhood.			●	
Addl doggie bag locations				●

Do you have any other comments, questions or concerns regarding parks, trails, or recreation facilities in Government Hill? (All Responses)	A	B	C	D
Hi - the residents of the condo association on the south side of the Northbluff Drive have serious concerns about proposals to divert the East Bluff Green Belt path up on to the bluff itself, which would provide unobstructed view for pedestrians into our bedrooms.				
More monitoring on the trails, homeless camps are set up.				●
I am grateful that Alaska Trails has helped put in trails to promote a healthier, walking community. The Commons may need some help with signage to make others know if it's presence.			●	
Perhaps the best natural feature/asset of Government Hill is the south facing sunlight and panoramic views of mountains, city, ocean for all to enjoy. We would like to embrace, enhance, and preserve that and make this a walking/running/hiking/biking friendly neighborhood so many can enjoy this unique scenery Government Hill offers.	●	●		
No				
Also, creating a view shed for both Greenbelts would invite the whole neighborhood and public trail users to enjoy the coastal views rather than only the houses on the bluff enjoying the view (exactly the same as what our Tony Knowles Coastal Trail offers).		●		
I want the fencing that separates the railway from the residential areas to be kept for safety reasons.				●
The question ranking choices was backwards - usually you rank from most to least - i wonder if people got confused and it messed with the data. I'd definitely check the results just in case.				
The Wireless building needs to be moved to one of the parks and preserved.				●
Could we host more events here? I know parking would be a nightmare, but it would be kind of cool to have more local events here and or a little place where they are all advertised.			●	
How can we get involved?				
Space for dogs would be great, and regular maintenance of the tennis and basketball courts.			●	●
A dog park would be amazing for the neighborhood! Many of us use the tennis court and this would create a great community spot for both owners and dogs.			●	
Access to drinking water in a few places would be great.				●
We have an amazing and healthy community - let's keep a focus on positive wellness!				
The city sold us a lot by touting the views. I would like to see the municipality improve the views from the bluff. Cut a few trees. Also paint the water tower or remove it.		●		
The Browns Point cottages have historic value; I preserved them once and they may have park value also. Better connection with the base bike trails would be good. A corridor through the Port and ties to small boat harbor would also be good.	●			
The Hancock Overlook will be needing some help to maintain its view.		●		

Do you have any other comments, questions or concerns regarding parks, trails, or recreation facilities in Government Hill? (All Responses)	A	B	C	D
I would love to see the basketball court have a fence and turn into a hockey rink for winter use. Historical plaques to commemorate our rich local history. Earthquake pictures for Sunset park would be very informative. Al miller park used to be a fox farm. Brown's point is named after pioneers Nelly and Jack. Some area to talk about the history of Anchorage's oldest neighborhood. I.e. railroad housing, wireless building, first grocery store, etc. all of this could be under the water tower open area.			●	●
No				
Start a Gov Hill Bird Cherry removal program. Mark the trees so residents can remove the trees.				●
I am thankful for our parks and active community council				
Keep up parks - they make GH neighborhood what it is.				
minimize the size of outhouses in parks. Add trash cans to the bluff park on the west side.				●
Please bring back the community trail work programs. They can be executed safely in an outdoor setting, and these guided work sessions provide an effective and efficient way to build new trails w/ neighborhood buy-in.				●
Again, I highly recommend developing the East Bluff Greenbelt to create an awesome greenbelt trail for the East side neighbors of Government Hill. This would match the West side and extend the trail for the advantage of the entire East and West neighborhoods. Also, a safe bike-friendly overpass over East Loop Road for pedestrians (kids) to safely cross their bikes on the trails (and to get to school). Many elementary kids also illegally ride their bikes not at the intersection, but under the pedestrian overpass. Regardless of the GH principal and teachers telling students not to cross that way. The tragic accident of a kiddo crossing her bike at the intersection at Loop/Hollywood by absent-minded driver is should never happen.	●		●	
Try to use volunteers as much as possible to stretch funding and create sense of community				
The current trail system on GH is amazing! It would be wonderful to connect all of the trails/ parks. Crossing at the stop light can be dangerous, so a pedestrian bridge by the Curling Club would be wonderful	●		●	
Hillcrest, the COOP Preschool, is worthy of community support and great public facilities nearby				●
Government Hill needs safer access to the Coastal Trail and the Ship Creek trail. The bridge sidewalk is too narrow and is even more difficult in the winter. A better path through the Ocean Dock Dive (?) area would be great. Thank you and keep up the great work.	●			
No				
Redesign the Anderson Street parking area at Susan McKay park to be shallower and wide enough to park 4 vehicles side by side, and not the current tandem setup. This would increase safety, and discourage illicit activity.				●
I LOVE our parks and trails in the neighborhood, including the Commons - it is one of the reasons we bought our first home in Government Hill! We walk or jog the approx. 3-mile loop around the neighborhood at least 3-5 times per week. I feel the greatest need is actually external connections between the neighborhood and nearby areas. For example, to get to the nearby Ship Creek Trail, you have to carefully negotiate rail/port traffic and on ramps/off ramps with no shoulders, or go significantly out of the way by crossing the bridge and doubling back.	●			
Government Hill is a wonderful area..				
no				

Do you have any other comments, questions or concerns regarding parks, trails, or recreation facilities in Government Hill? (All Responses)	A	B	C	D
Why does the East Bluff Greenbelt continue to be neglected. Why is so much of this green belt fenced preventing access by the public?			●	
More maintenance is needed for parks remain clean and safe alderwood, Harvard and sunset parks are used a lot but are always dirty and often overlooked by grounds keeping. Grass needs to be mowed and weeds and trash removed more often.				●
Count:	6	13	12	14



GOVERNMENT HILL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

c/o Community Councils Center • 1057 West Fireweed Lane, Suite 100
Anchorage, AK 99503

Jody Sola, President

Stephanie Kesler, Vice President

Peter Partnow, Secretary

Zoe Lowery, Treasurer

Bob French, FCC Representative

Belinda MacIntire, Ron Clark, Pete Murphy At-Large Board Members

GOVERNMENT HILL COMMUNITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2023-002

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS AND TRAILS PLAN FOR GOVERNMENT HILL

WHEREAS, Government Hill is one of Anchorage's four original neighborhoods, is rich with Alaskan history, and is home for an ethnically and economically diverse group of residents; and

WHEREAS, the 2013 *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan* aims to promote the orderly growth, improvement, and future development of the Government Hill neighborhood, and identifies parks and open space as integral to the community and to maintaining a safety buffer between residential and industrial use; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, Government Hill Community Council passed Resolution 2019-005 in favor of planning and prioritizing park projects; and

WHEREAS, based on the community's interest in a system-wide planning approach, the Plan identifies and prioritizes future investments in parks, trails, and recreation facilities, addresses community recreation needs, documents issues and concerns, and provides implementation strategies to improve parks and trails in the Government Hill neighborhood over the next 20 years; and

WHEREAS, the Plan also captures common themes and community values like maintaining non-motorized connectivity throughout the neighborhood and managing forest health and maintaining identified scenic views for public benefit; and

WHEREAS, the Plan provides six overarching goals for park improvements including to 1) take care of existing assets, 2) add wayfinding and other amenities throughout parks and trails, 3) expand year-round recreational opportunities, 4) manage greenbelt forest health, 5) improve non-motorized connections to parks and trails, and 6) work across agencies to advance recreational use of opportunity sites; and

WHEREAS, the Plan makes recommendations ranging from small Clean-and-Green Improvements to larger Capital Improvements for the East and West Bluff Greenbelts, 8 municipal parks, and the Government Hill Commons; and

WHEREAS, Anchorage Parks and Recreation will continue to work with the Government Hill Community Council to implement park projects and recommendations from the Plan;

GOVERNMENT HILL COMMUNITY COUNCIL


Established 1915 • Anchorage's First and *Oldest* Neighborhood

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Government Hill Community Council supports the proposed Government Hill Neighborhood Parks and Trails Plan and recommends plan approval by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

THIS RESOLUTION WAS APPROVED by the Government Hill Community Council on March 16, 2023.

by a vote of: FOR 13, AGAINST 0, ABSTAIN 0.

Signed:



Jody Sola, President



Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska
Parks & Recreation Commission

632 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 630
P.O. Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519



PRC RES NO. 2023-06
GOVERNMENT HILL NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS AND TRAILS 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 2013 *Government Hill Neighborhood Plan* identifies parks and open space as integral to the community and to maintaining a buffer between residential and industrial use, and in 2019, Government Hill Community Council passed Resolution 2019-005 in favor of planning and prioritizing park projects on a system-wide scale; and

WHEREAS, the proposed *Government Hill Neighborhood Parks and Trails Plan* (the Plan) identifies and prioritizes future investments in parks, trails, and recreation facilities, addresses community recreation needs, documents issues and concerns, and provides implementation strategies to improve parks and trails in the Government Hill neighborhood over the next 20 years; and

WHEREAS, the Plan also captures common themes and community values like expanding the greenbelt buffer around the neighborhood, maintaining non-motorized connectivity between parks within and outside of the neighborhood, managing greenbelt forest health, and maintaining scenic views for public benefit; and

WHEREAS, the Plan provides six overarching goals for park improvements including to 1) take care of existing assets, 2) add amenities throughout parks and trails, 3) expand year-round recreational opportunities, 4) manage greenbelt forest health, 5) improve non-motorized connections to parks and trails, and 6) work across agencies to advance recreational use of opportunity sites; and

WHEREAS, the Plan makes recommendations ranging from small Clean-and-Green Improvements to larger Capital Improvements for the East and West Bluff Greenbelts, 8 municipal parks, and the Government Hill Commons; and

WHEREAS, Anchorage Parks and Recreation created the plan in collaboration with neighborhood residents and an Advisory Group, earned a resolution of support from the Government Hill Community Council, and will continue to work with residents to implement recommendations from the Plan;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Parks and Recreation Commission supports the proposed *Government Hill Neighborhood Parks and Trails Plan* and recommends approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 13th day of April, 2023.

Chair
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

Mike Braniff, Director
Parks & Recreation Department