



Valley of the Moon Park Site Plan Update

Advisory Group Meeting #1
March 18, 2014 • Spenard Recreation Center

Overview:

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

The first advisory group meeting for the Valley of the Moon Park site plan update took place on March 18th, 2014.

Attendees:

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

Meeting Synopsis:

The meeting began with introductions from all the attendees and was followed by an overview of the Valley of the Moon Park project by Parks & Recreation Park Planner Steve Rafuse. Steve explained the purpose of the site plan update and the key issues that Parks and Recreation hopes to address by updating the site plan. Steve also described the approval process required to implement an update to the site plan and the advisory group's role as an advisory body to Parks and Recreation. Steve finished with a review of the development history of Valley of the Moon Park which included a look at past and present site plans.

Anchorage Parks and Recreation Park Planner Josh Durand followed with a discussion of the opportunities and constraints based on the current configuration of amenities at Valley of the Moon Park. Using aerial imagery of the park, Josh provided an overview of use patterns and design considerations. Josh identified several key issues that Parks and Recreation hopes to address in the site plan update. These issues include: 1) relocation of the port-a-potty and screen to a serviceable location; 2) expand parking to address overflow parking onto 17th Ave; and 3) provide a formal direction for the ball field/off-leash dog park. This overview provided a starting point for a larger group discussion.

Following the discussion of opportunities and constraints, the meeting continued with each advisory group member sharing their experiences with the park. Advisory group members expressed their thoughts and concerns and discussed what improvements are most desirable.

Individual Group Member Comments:

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

Nick Moe:

- Forest: Positive use of the forest to discourage undesirable behavior and the negative presence of homeless activity (pump track or children's forest)
- Signage: Add signs to encourage bike/pedestrian/transit near parking lot
- Parking: Does not like high cost of building a parking lot
- Volleyball: A good addition to the park
- Adult fitness equipment: A good addition to the park
- Open Space: Space south of ball field is valuable and highly used (Stargazing, Ultimate Frisbee)
- Dog Park: Current space works – does not want to see too much of the budget invested

Kelsey Parpart:

- Dog Park: Separate areas for large dogs and small dogs in separate locations preferred to a single dog park separated by a fence, separate entrances, no sand

Helen Thomas:

- Dog Park: Deters negative behavior and less desirable traffic, likes idea of separate areas for small dogs and large dogs
- Bike Trail: Likes the idea of a bike path through the woods c E St/16th Ave to C St Gardens

Matt Johnson:

- Safety: Concerned about traffic and safety (at the bend in the road Arctic Blvd/17th Ave) and the proximity to the playground
- Adult Fitness Equipment: West of the playground may be a good location
- Bike Lanes: Prefers bike lanes separated from traffic on E St.

Mark Butler:

- Forest: "protect the woods", recent degradation of the forest from homeless and other groups, forest protects from the "blight" of C St.
- Adult Fitness Equipment: Previous task force located equipment at bike trail intersection of park and Chester Creek Trail
- Safety: Continue fence from Arctic Blvd around bend to parking lot
- Parking: Overflow parking can be located to the east of the existing lot and north of the ball field fence
- Bike Trail: Straighten (north-south) bike path and locate dog park to the east in open field and forest
- Facilities: Add more picnic tables
- Other: Negotiate a land trade for properties to the east of the park

Lanie Fleischer:

- Dog Park: Likes to walk dogs on trails/footpaths in the woods (i.e. Connors Bog), trails in the woods help discourage homelessness and other undesirable activity
- Forest: Protect the woods, footpaths and trails won't require lots of trees to come down
- Bike Trail: Move (north-south) bike path west – so as not to go through the middle of a dog park

Susan Miller:

- Restrooms: Move port-a-potty where they can be serviced, open in winter
- Ball field: Would like to see kids using little league fields, P&R should contact little league/softball
- Dog Park: Dog park is a “good idea” but prefers not to give up ball field
- Forest: Trails in the woods, bring the park into the woods - “let people know” that the woods are parkland
- Children’s Forest: Add children’s fairy forest, add entrance arch
- Disc Golf: Site has potential for a 9 disc course
- Community Gardens: Expand and add more community garden plots
- Parking: Overflow parking can be located to the east of the existing lot and north of the ball field fence, also expand to the west, or off of 16th Ave. and E St.
- Bike Trail: Consider adding water fountain/faucet along bike trail (every mile or so)

Anna Bryant:

- Facilities: Add another picnic shelter, add more trash cans – particularly, if you are developing a dog park
- Parking Lot: Expand parking lot to the east
- Dog Park: Likes the idea of a dog park in the forest
- Playground: More playground equipment – “is there a need for more play equipment?”
- Adult Fitness Equipment: Locate west of playground
- Safety: Add fence along Arctic Blvd and 17th Ave
- Children’s Forest: Could be a good Girl Scout project, geocaching area)
- Other: Sponsor “clean ups”- little dog group would be willing
- Other: Limit the number of ice cream trucks taking up space in the parking lot
- Community Gardens: Expand C St. gardens

Penny Burt:

- Dog Park: “dogs are top priority”, dogs and trees go well together
- Restrooms: Add more toilets, port-a-potty’s okay
- Other: Encourage park users to use cell phones to deter undesirable behavior

Pedro Kim:

- Adult Fitness Equipment: Good idea to locate near playground for adults to use while their children (i.e. nieces) play
- Community Garden: Expand the C St. Community Gardens

- Other: Add bike tool station at key trail intersections
- Other: Build a pump track in the woods

Melonie Rieck:

- Adult Fitness Equipment: Do people use the equipment?, locate equipment that people will use - near the playground
- Dog Park: Dog park = more cars
- Parking: How much more parking do we add - adding more parking leads to more cars
- Forest: Trees provide natural value (i.e. flood protection and mitigation), recommends using wood chips for trails through the woods
- Community Gardens: Issues of theft and unauthorized use at the Community Gardens, questions about locking the gate and the Muni's lack of enforcement
- Restrooms: Add more toilets
- Volleyball: Add volleyball nets
- Other: The park as a family area
- Other: Acquire land to the east of the park

Summary of Common Advisory Group Themes:

Parking Lot: Overflow parking in summer was recognized by the group as a major issue. While the question of how much parking to add was not specifically addressed, the group's comments suggest that an expansion of the parking lot to the east of its current location was a viable option. The group briefly entertained the option of a new parking lot off of E St and 16th Ave as an alternative entrance to a dog park. This option may be worth further exploration.

Dog Park: The group acknowledges the popularity of a dog park at Valley of the Moon Park. Members suggested a fenced dog park with some access to the woods and trails would be welcome and may help discourage undesirable activity and homelessness in the forest. Members who were dog owners agreed that a separate area for big and little dogs was desirable.

There was general agreement to locate the dog park away from other park amenities and that adequate separation of a dog park and picnic and playground facilities is important. The group recognizes the challenges and constraints of the site in locating an off leash dog area and providing for fluid bike and pedestrian circulation.

Restrooms: The group recognizes the challenges of servicing the port-a-potty in their current location and agrees to move them with screen to a more functional location.

Adult Fitness Equipment: The group supported adult fitness equipment located near (west of) the playground. This location would allow adults to work out and supervise their playing children at the same time.

Forest: The forest on the eastern side of the park was widely discussed by the group. The group recognized the negative effects of homeless camps and other undesirable activity taking place in the woods. The general feeling among the group was to protect the character of the woods as a natural area and buffer but also to activate the space as a way to discourage negative activity. Activating the forest with trails, a dog park, pump track or children's fairy forest have all been proposed – the appropriateness of each activity for this location will require further discussion.

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

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

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

Volleyball: Volleyball was discussed briefly. Several members suggested developing volleyball courts at the park and the overall response was favorable. However, more discussion as to location and size will be necessary.

Children's Forest: The idea of a Children's Forest was brought up as a way to engage children's imagination. While members supported this idea, the close proximity to some of the more undesirable activity taking place in woods will require further deliberation among the group.

Facilities: The group recognized Valley of the Moon Park as a popular gathering place for families and friends. Several members suggested additional facilities such as a picnic shelter, picnic tables, restrooms, and trash cans.

Other: The advisory group had a range of comments that do not fall neatly in a given category. Comments such as: "use cell phones to report negative behavior", "sponsor clean up days", "acquire the land to the east", "the park is a family park", and "limit the number of ice cream trucks" - provide a range of perspectives from those who use the park on a regular basis. Summed up, advisory group members recognize the importance of park user's to take ownership of the park.

Next Meeting:

The next advisory group meeting will be April 15th (6-8pm) at the Federation of Community Councils office on 1049 West Fireweed Lane.