

Date: October 19, 2017

To: Assembly Committee of the Whole

From: Alexandra Pierce, Project Manager, Parks & Recreation

Subject: Parks & Recreation Master Plan Update

Attached is an update on the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. As you are aware, we are engaged in a long-term planning process to determine the community's priorities for Parks & Recreation over the coming decades, translate those priorities into an overarching vision, and develop a road map to achieve that vision. The final document will be easily updatable and will recommend actions to be completed over the next ten years. The project includes five phases; we are currently in Phase 4, and will be submitting a draft plan for public review in early 2018:

- Phase 1, Project Planning: March – September 2016
- Phase 2, Public Consultation: September – December 2016
- Phase 3, Preliminary Recommendations: January – September 2017
- Phase 4, Draft Master Plan: October 2017 – March 2018
- Phase 5, Final Master Plan: April – June 2018

In his presentation to the COW, Kirk Duncan will give you an overview of the planning process, and of our findings to date. There will be a question and answer period following the presentation. This update is a follow up to the memo and draft recommendations you received in July. The attached document provides more detail on the current status of the plan, some of the emerging themes from the public process, and how those themes will be translated into goals and recommendations in the draft plan.

Parks & Recreation (Parks & Rec) is in the process of developing a new Parks & Recreation Master Plan (Plan) to help guide the department over the next 10-20 years. This is a high-level visionary document that sets a long-term direction for parks and recreation services in Juneau and provides a roadmap to achieve that vision with policies and recommendations to be executed over the next ten years. The most recent Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1997, with the recommendations chapter updated in 2007. Since the completion of the 1997 plan, several new facilities have been constructed or acquired and shifts in community demographics, needs and priorities have not been assessed in relation to parks and recreation. The objective of this project is to identify how the department can best serve the needs of Juneau residents and address gaps in the system to help us meet those needs.

Why do a Plan?

The Plan will provide an overarching vision for Parks & Rec in Juneau and identify needs and priorities. It will include goals and recommendations about individual programs and facilities, but will not include detailed action plans for these recommendations. Some issues will be addressed in parallel or projects, such as a parks inventory, or subsequent projects, including a fees and charges strategy and a trails master plan. The final document will be a critical decision making tool for the department. The decisions we make today will impact how we administer our programs in the future and it is important to pay attention to both the community's immediate needs and its long-term goals when deciding how to administer our resources.

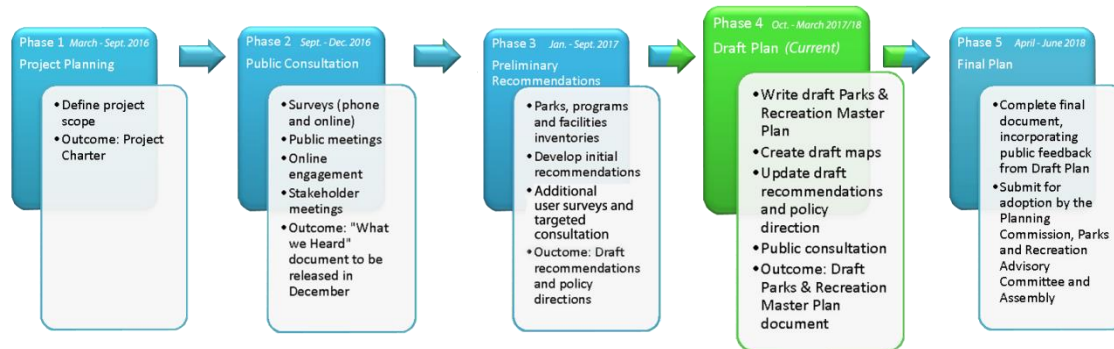
Parks & Rec manages our own programs and services and helps facilitate activities provided by other service providers. We partner with these organizations, providing space, scholarships, support, and sometimes collaboration on programming. As part of our public consultation, we reached out to our partners to learn about their goals and priorities and ensure that their needs are reflected in our policy document.

Parks & Rec benefits the community and we want to ensure we are maximizing public value in the programs and services we provide. The Juneau Economic Development Plan identifies building the senior economy and attracting and preparing the next generation workforce as economic development priorities. Quality of life is an essential component of maintaining a vibrant community and retaining and developing talent in Juneau. The community conversation around recreation priorities provides an opportunity to ask residents about current and future needs, as well as opportunities to maintain a healthy, vibrant, and attractive community.

The Plan will focus on the core functions of Parks & Rec, though the department manages other CBJ functions. The following deliverables and tasks are managed by the department but excluded from the project:

- **Fees and Charges/Cost Recovery**
 - Parks & Rec will define a fees and charges policy and cost recovery targets in a separate but related project to be completed following the Plan process.
- **Parking**
 - Parking is administered by Parks & Rec, but is also managed in some way by nine different CBJ departments. CBJ is in the process of evaluating parking services and programs. The parking function is outside of the core scope of the Parks and Recreation department and therefore is excluded from this project.
- **Centennial Hall**
 - Centennial Hall has a facility plan drafted in 2004 that is still relevant to current operations. Any public comments received during the Plan consultation process is being forwarded to the manager for review and possible action.
- **Building Maintenance**
 - Building maintenance is controlled by Parks and Recreation but touches every other municipal department. It is outside the core scope of Parks and Recreation and will be excluded from this project.

Timeline



What we Heard

In December of 2016, Parks & Recreation issued a document titled "What we Heard" that compiled the results of public and stakeholder consultation conducted over the preceding months, through the following channels:

- **Public Surveys** – McDowell Group was contracted to conduct phone and online surveys. The phone survey sampled 500 Juneau households and included calls to both landlines and cell phones. The phone survey is statistically valid at a 95% confidence interval. The online survey was administered via PlaceSpeak, our public consultation platform, and received over 300 responses. While the phone survey constitutes a random sample, online survey respondents self-selected.
- **Stakeholder meetings** – Parks & Rec staff met with over 30 stakeholder groups to discuss the Master Plan process and to collect feedback on each group's specific use of our facilities and services; alignment of long-term goals and plans; and ideas for improvement. The goal of these meetings was to ensure that our partners' long-term priorities are reflected in Parks & Rec's policy document.
- **Public Meetings** – Parks & Rec staff held 5 public meetings throughout Juneau during October of 2016. The public meetings included a short presentation as well as large format boards with information about our facilities and programs. Attendees were asked to fill out a card with a brief poll and any comments.
- **Online Engagement** – Parks & Rec contracted PlaceSpeak for online engagement services. At the time of this report, 523 residents have registered with PlaceSpeak and connected to the Master Plan topic, and 2800 have viewed the page. These residents were able to view a video of public meeting presentation, and read background information about the topic. Connected residents were able to take the online survey, and participate in discussion forums; they will receive updates and other opportunities to provide feedback as the project moves forward. We are currently using PlaceSpeak to gather more specific information as a follow up to previous outreach. We recently wrapped up a survey about dog parks and are currently administering a survey on youth and senior activities.
- **Initial Group/Special Committee** – A group of Parks & Rec stakeholders and informed community members were convened in the scoping phase of the project. These individuals provided guidance on the project plan and public consultation strategy. This group was disbanded after their third meeting in September 2016. A special committee of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) was be convened in January 2017 to serve as a working group for the Master Plan. This committee will be demographically representative of Juneau and will provide feedback on detailed sections of the Master Plan.

The document did not make specific recommendations, but did identify emerging themes. These themes, presented alphabetically and not necessarily in order of importance, were further analyzed to inform the recommendations that will ultimately form the backbone of the Plan. Key recommendations and updates, where appropriate, are listed under each theme:

- **Affordability**

Many residents feel that Parks & Rec facilities and services should either be free to everyone or specifically to low-income residents; 17% of adult and 29% of youth phone survey respondents who do not participate in an activity they would like to reported money as a barrier to participation. Several individuals cited a free recreation facility in Ketchikan as an example of something they would like to see in Juneau.

Recommendations:

- An additional public process will be needed to determine a fees and charges strategy for Parks & Rec programs, services, and commercial permits. It is our responsibility to ensure we are striking a fair balance between maximizing cost recovery and financial accessibility for all residents. The fees and charges strategy will commence after the completion of the Master Plan and will include a public process around priorities for funding recreation.

- **Augustus Brown Pool**

Our public outreach materials stated that Augustus Brown Pool requires \$4.5 million in structural repairs in the coming years. A number of residents support keeping the facility open, with several suggesting we close the facility. The public phone survey found that 52% of residents rated Augustus Brown Pool as having very high or high community value and 28% of households reported using the facility in the past 12 months.

Recommendations:

- Complete required capital projects to keep Augustus Brown Pool in working order.

Update:

- Augustus Brown Pool repairs and upgrades were included in the 1% Sales Tax, which passed on October 3rd.

- **Bike Trails / Paths**

Biking has long been a popular activity in Juneau, with mountain biking recently growing in popularity. Many residents suggested both mountain bike trails and commuter connections. There was also support for lighted bike paths and a mountain bike skills park integrated into the existing park and trail network. It should be noted that phone survey respondents participated in biking in much lower numbers (12% road biking, 4% mountain biking) than online survey respondents (41% road biking, 33% mountain biking).

Recommendations:

- Improve lighting on public bike paths; advocate for improved commuter connections to Parks & Rec facilities; work community partners to find and develop an appropriate site for future bike skills park for all ages and abilities.

Update:

- Parks & Rec is currently working with Juneau Mountain Bike Alliance on finding an appropriate site for a volunteer built bike skills park.

- **Community Value**

Juneau values parks and recreation services. The majority of those who provided input felt that Parks & Rec delivers a valuable community service and should continue to be supported. Three quarters (77%) of survey respondents rated parks and recreation as very or somewhat important to their choice to live in Juneau, while 94% of adults in Juneau believe that recreation programs and facilities are a somewhat or very important use of public funds.

Recommendations

Complete a fees and charges strategy that determines the best balance of user affordability and fiscal responsibility.

- **Dog Parks**

Lena Park was identified as a potential off-leash dog park by residents who noted that the fields are not frequently used for baseball or softball and the site could easily be adapted into an off-leash park with the installation of a fence and waste disposal facilities. Residents also requested more off leash areas throughout the community.

Recommendations:

- Evaluate and if appropriate establish additional fenced off-leash areas

Update:

- In July, we used the survey function on PlaceSpeak to ask the public more targeted questions about off-leash dog areas and residents requested additional space in the Mendenhall Valley and echoed previous comments about the conversion of Lena Park.

• **Ice**

The Treadwell Arena currently operates from early morning to late at night and Juneau residents are interested in additional indoor ice, with a number of commenters supporting an addition to the existing facility and others suggesting a new facility in the Mendenhall Valley. Summer use or year-round opportunities at the Treadwell Arena were also important to residents.

Recommendations:

- Continue to work with partner organizations to balance ice time needs; provide alternative programming when ice is removed; continue to maintain Treadwell Arena, including replacing the roof; Complete small facility renovations to improve user and spectator amenities

Update:

- While ice time at Treadwell Arena is at a premium during peak hours, community support is not sufficient to recommend a second sheet of ice at this time. If demand increases, options for renovation to the existing facility may be explored.

• **Indoor Recreation Space**

Residents support more indoor recreation space in the form of either another field house type facility or a Parks & Rec controlled gym space. Parks & Rec currently works with Juneau School District to schedule our programs in school gyms and many residents would like to see a facility specifically for community recreation. The existing Dimond Park Field House is managed by Eaglecrest and programming is scheduled by an external board.

Recommendations:

- Continue to provide multi-use indoor training/gym space; Provide geographically distributed multi-use indoor gym spaces, with highest priority to new facility in the Mendenhall Valley when resources become available.

• **Lemon Creek**

Residents recognize the need for additional Parks & Rec programming in Lemon Creek, in the form of parks, trails and recreation opportunities. The area is home to a number of underserved youth and adults and transportation to participate in activities or use facilities can be a challenge, particularly for young people.

Update:

- Parks & Rec staff contributed to the Lemon Creek Area Plan, (adopted??) which recommends expansion of park space, improved bike connections to Twin Lakes and other nearby Parks & Rec amenities, and trail improvements.

Recommendations:

- Develop additional park space in Lemon Creek; Expand services to include transportation to sports activities, particularly for youth residing in Lemon Creek and other neighborhoods with a large concentration of young people and few recreation amenities

• **Maintain what we have**

Juneau residents are aware of the current local and statewide budget situation and many feel that it is irresponsible to take on additional capital projects or commit to new spending at this time. These residents believe that Parks & Rec should focus its efforts on maintaining existing parks, trails, and recreational facilities to a high standard and do not support the development of new facilities.

Recommendations:

- Maintain our parks to the standards prescribed in the parks inventory; complete parks CIP projects as prioritized in the parks inventory, avoid deferring needed maintenance.

Update:

- Parks & Rec asset management is largely a building maintenance function, but consideration of maintaining our assets including facilities, parks, and trails is a critical function of the department and will be covered in the Plan.

- **Off Road Vehicles**

We received a number of comments in support of an ORV park somewhere in Juneau, with several comments against building such a facility. It is currently illegal to operate ORVs on CBJ park lands. While most comments in support of an ORV facility did not identify a specific location, the comments against tended to specifically site the Hendrickson Natural Park area in North Douglas where an ORV park was previously considered. Relatively few residents (2% of phone survey respondents and 9% of online survey respondents) mentioned ORV motorsports as an activity they currently participate in, but 5% of adults who took the phone survey and 12% of those who took the online survey described ORV use as an activity they do not currently participate in but would like to; ORV trails or a park were cited by 15% of residents who said the CBJ should invest in recreation assets or facilities in the next 10 years.

Recommendations:

- As a constituency continues to develop for ORVs and other specific uses, the Parks & Rec department will work with the user group to assess viability and options; Encourage ORV community to organize and set priorities for future ORV development; Work with ORV user groups and neighbors to identify acceptable areas for ORV activities; Facilitate development of viable opportunities for ORV recreation.

- **Partnerships**

A number of residents noted the importance of working with local partners to enhance the Juneau service network. Sports organizations, cultural communities, social service partners, education providers, and government agencies were all identified as potential partners.

Recommendations:

- Continue working with community partners to provide ADA accessible facilities and/or adaptive programming for residents with disabilities
- Manage demands for facility time fairly, with youth activities taking highest priority
- Encourage collaboration between community partners and internal collaboration between Parks & Recreation facilities and programs
- Balance needs of community partners operating at the Eagle Valley Center to ensure that services are complimentary and provide the best possible array of opportunities for the community
- Encourage and support community partners in fundraising initiatives to make improvements to parks, trails and recreational facilities
- Encourage and foster collaboration among and with community partners on trail projects
- Provide leadership to trail user groups in navigating land management issues

- **Pipeline Skate Park**

Pipeline Skate Park ranks third in frequency of facility use, meaning that of households that use Parks & Rec facilities, skate park users visited the facility frequently; with an average of 22.7 visits per year. The skate park needs roof and drainage repairs. Residents were vocal about the need to address these issues and also suggested improvements including outdoor hardscapes and new ramps. Several individuals suggested a second skate park downtown or in Douglas. Pipeline has a dedicated user group with a history of leading fundraising initiatives for repairs and upgrades.

Recommendations:

- Complete roof repairs; continue to work with the user group to support fundraising efforts and make necessary improvements.

- **Restroom Facilities**

We received a number of requests for additional restroom facilities at parks and trailheads and for permanent facilities at some sites, notably at Capital School Park.

Recommendations:

- Evaluate which parks require restrooms and add to CIP budget

- **Seniors**

A number of residents made general comments about doing more for our seniors for about additional programming for seniors. More specific requests cited the importance of Augustus

Brown Pool to local seniors and the need for more trails and parks with benches and easy grades for seniors and others with mobility issues.

Update:

- A survey is currently underway to evaluate community requests for seniors programming, results will inform additional recommendations/

- **Support for Underserved Residents**

The need to identify underserved communities and develop a strategy to eliminate barriers to participation for underserved residents is a stated goal of the master planning process, and Juneau residents agree, with many citing specific cultural communities and others stating a need for programs for at-risk youth, after school programs, and expanded programs to make recreation more affordable to all Juneau residents. One third of adult phone survey respondents and one quarter of youth do not participate in recreation activities they would like to; with finances, (17% of adults and 29% of youth) and transportation (18% of youth) identified as barriers to participation. Several commenters suggested that CBJ could improve transportation to recreational facilities for youth. Parks & Rec and other community service providers offer youth scholarships, and these programs can be enhanced to be more streamlined for applicants and visible in the community.

Recommendations:

- Continue to work with community partners to simplify youth activities scholarship process for low income families; expand youth scholarship programs and explore options for linking programs to free and reduced lunch list.
- Continue to work with and engage community partners within the youth programming domain.
- Expand services to include transportation to sports activities, particularly for youth residing in Lemon Creek and other neighborhoods with a large concentration of young people and few recreation amenities.

- **Trail Maintenance and Upgrades**

In the past 12 months, 89% of Juneau residents used Juneau trails for walking, hiking, running, cross country skiing, biking and other forms of recreation; with 78% ranking city trails as high or very high value to the community. Hiking is overwhelmingly the most popular recreational activity in Juneau with 53% of phone survey respondents reporting hiking in the spring/summer, and 32% reporting hiking in the fall/winter. 81% of online survey respondents reported hiking in the spring/summer, followed by walking at 76%. In the fall/winter online survey respondents reported walking and running at 57% each, followed by cross country skiing at 40%. Many commenters suggested continued maintenance and improvements on existing trails, notably Treadwell Ditch Trail, with others suggesting new trails with a focus on connections between existing networks.

Recommendations:

- Trails will be addressed at a high level, but it is a future priority for Parks & Rec to complete a multi-agency trails plan in collaboration with the State of Alaska, United States Forest Service, and Trail Mix. Trail management and funding in Juneau is governed by multiple agencies, and Juneau does not currently have an adopted trails plan, despite 89% of residents reporting using trails. The trails plan is slated to start in 2018.

Update:

- Work with State, Federal and Trail Mix partners to complete a multi-agency trail plan that sets trail management objectives, prioritizes trail projects, identifies plans for expansion, articulates a strategy for user conflict, clarifies land ownership issues, sets overarching trail policies, and formally adopts the Forest Service Trail Standards as the best practice for trail development and maintenance in Juneau.

- **Turf Fields**

Many field users support conversion of existing ball fields to artificial turf. There is strong support for turf baseball and softball fields at Adair Kennedy Park and maintenance and repairs to the existing turf soccer and football field at Adair Kennedy. Expectedly, the Juneau School District and field user groups are proponents of turf fields.

Update:

- The recently completed Adair Kennedy Park Master Plan includes tournament sized turf baseball and softball fields.

Recommendations:

- Provide tournament size baseball and softball fields with artificial turf.

- **Youth Activities**

Numerous residents agree that Parks & Rec provides the “ounce of prevention” against crime, alcohol problems, and drug use and constructive activities for children and adults contribute to a healthy and safe community. Many noted that this is especially true for youth and that affordable youth programs, after school activities, and identification and removal of barriers to participation for disadvantaged youth are important functions for Parks & Rec. A number of residents also feel that youth sports are valuable to all the community’s children and should continue to be supported. Outdoor programs for youth, indoor programs for youth, afterschool programs for youth and summer youth programs were the top four most important investments in programming cited by phone survey respondents; online survey results also prioritized youth activities.

Update:

- A survey is currently underway that asks for more specific information regarding types of youth program offerings including outdoor programs, pre-kindergarten programs, and potential expansion of the BAM after school program. Current recommendations include general expansion in all these areas, and we are now in the process of assessing specific community needs.

Mission, Vision, Guiding Principles

These statements will shape the direction of the Plan. The mission is what we are seeking to accomplish with the planning process, the vision is our long-term, overarching goal for the process, and we will consider all plan elements in terms of the guiding principles. We provided current department mission and vision statements, and guiding principles from another community’s master plan. These were refined into the statements below:

- **Mission Statement**
To establish Parks & Recreation’s role as an essential partner in a healthy community
- **Vision Statement**
Guiding future decisions to provide the highest possible quality Parks & Recreation facilities, programs and services for all regardless of age, income, or ability
- **Guiding Principles**
 - The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will guide the department in:
 - Promoting community engagement, health, and wellness
 - Managing our assets effectively
 - Ensuring financial sustainability
 - Supporting community partnerships
 - Engaging youth and encouraging lifelong recreation
 - Serving the needs of a diverse and changing population
 - Fostering environmental stewardship
 - Increasing cultural awareness

Guiding principles inform goals, which in turn, inform recommendations. Policy statements form the goals and objectives of the plan. Recommendations are specific, measurable action items to be completed over the coming years. Recommendations are divided into three categories: required actions, recommended actions, and potential actions. Required actions are needed tasks and improvements and are generally short-term. Recommended actions are improvements to our programs and services to be made as time and funds become available. Potential actions are generally longer-term, higher cost items that are desired by a community group and may become more feasible in the future. Recommendations are also categorized as short-term (0-5 years), medium-term (5-10 years) or long-term (10+ years), and include a capital budget estimate where possible.

Inventories

The parks, programs and facilities inventory benchmarks Juneau's parks & Rec services against national guidelines and similar communities, and looks more closely at our current program offerings against community interest and demand.

- **Programs**

We are reviewing our program offerings and reaching out to the public with more targeted consultation around youth and senior activities. The outcome will inform future collaboration opportunities with community partners, and modifications to or additions of CBJ run programs.

- **Facilities**

We are reviewing our facility offerings against National Recreation and Park Association Guidelines as well as other remote communities. Additionally we are reviewing facility distribution and community need.

- **Parks**

The parks inventory is separate, more detailed project that will be summarized in the Master Plan. The scope of work is as follows:

Conduct a detailed evaluation of the physical condition and functionality of each CBJ managed park. Prepare a summary report highlighting deficiencies, opportunities and recommendations for system improvements. Parks will be considered in terms of the whole park instead of assessing individual pieces of equipment. The CBJ prefers to complete upgrades to entire parks and the outcome of this process will be to create a prioritized list of parks for improvement.

- Review existing park plans and consider conditions of upgraded parks
- Rank existing parks in terms of priority for upgrades and repairs
- Identify critical park projects

Conduct an analysis of the park system to determine whether Juneau has the right parks in the right locations with the right equipment. Prepare a summary report highlighting deficiencies, opportunities and recommendations for improving the distribution of parks in the CBJ system.

- GIS exercise to review Juneau park system against national (established by the NRPA). and local (established by the 1996 Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan) guidelines
 - Population per type of park or facility
 - Parks and facilities per square mile
- Update 1996 Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan classifications to reflect changes in the park system and to align with NRPA guidelines
 - Existing park classification review
 - Identified park project review (parks that already have developed master plans but construction has not been completed in full or at all)
- Identify areas with deficiencies or gaps
- Develop recommendations for closing gaps
- Prioritize parks for improvement and identify estimated budgets and timelines
- Parks & Rec has vast land holdings, including parcels that are unlikely to become programmed parks or conservation areas in the future. Identify park lands that do not currently have any infrastructure and with low conservation value, i.e. "stranded parcels" and consider disposal of those parcels that:
 - Do not have environmental protection areas (wetlands, stream corridors)
 - Are outside the urban service boundary
 - Are not steep slopes or avalanche hazard areas
 - Do not have current public use (trails)

We value continuous improvement and have enjoyed leading a community conversation about how we can adjust our programs and services to align with the needs of the public and our community partners.