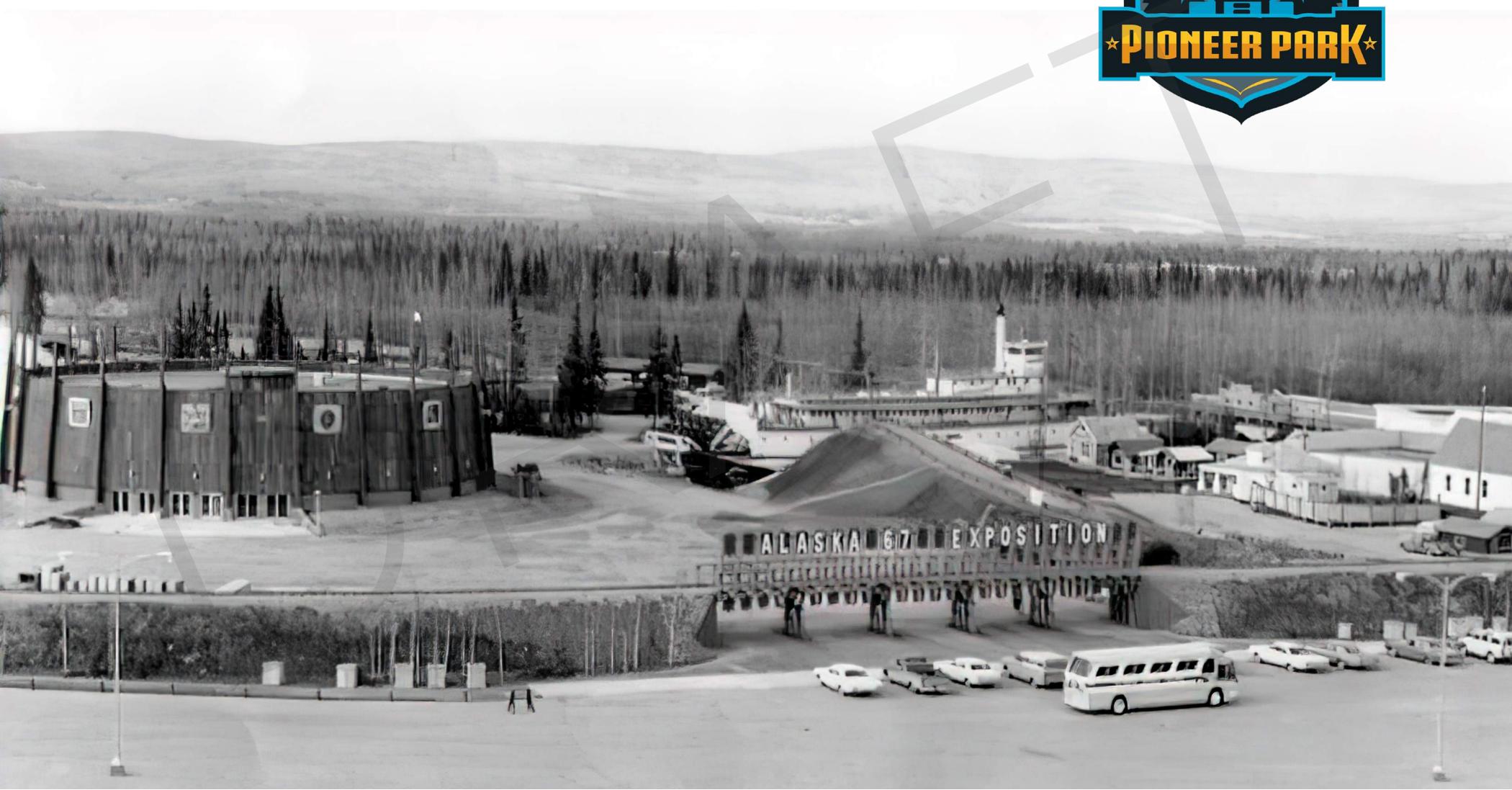


PIONEER PARK MASTER PLAN



AUGUST 2021 - DRAFT

AUGUST 12, 2021 DRAFT



BETTISWORTH
NORTH

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Acknowledgments

[Draft Land Acknowledgment]

Special thanks to the park visitors and citizens of Fairbanks who took time to attend public meetings and complete surveys

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PARK COMMUNITY CONTEXT

FAIRBANKS, ALASKA



UNIVERSITY OF
ALASKA FAIRBANKS

TANANA VALLEY
FAIRGROUNDS

CREAMERS FIELD
MIGRATORY
WATERFOWL REFUGE

PIONEER
PARK

GROWDEN
RECREATION
COMPLEX

FAIRBANKS
DOWNTOWN

DAVIS
SPORTS
COMPLEX

FORT
WAINWRIGHT

FAIRBANKS
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT

AUGUST 12, 2021 DRAFT



INTRODUCTION

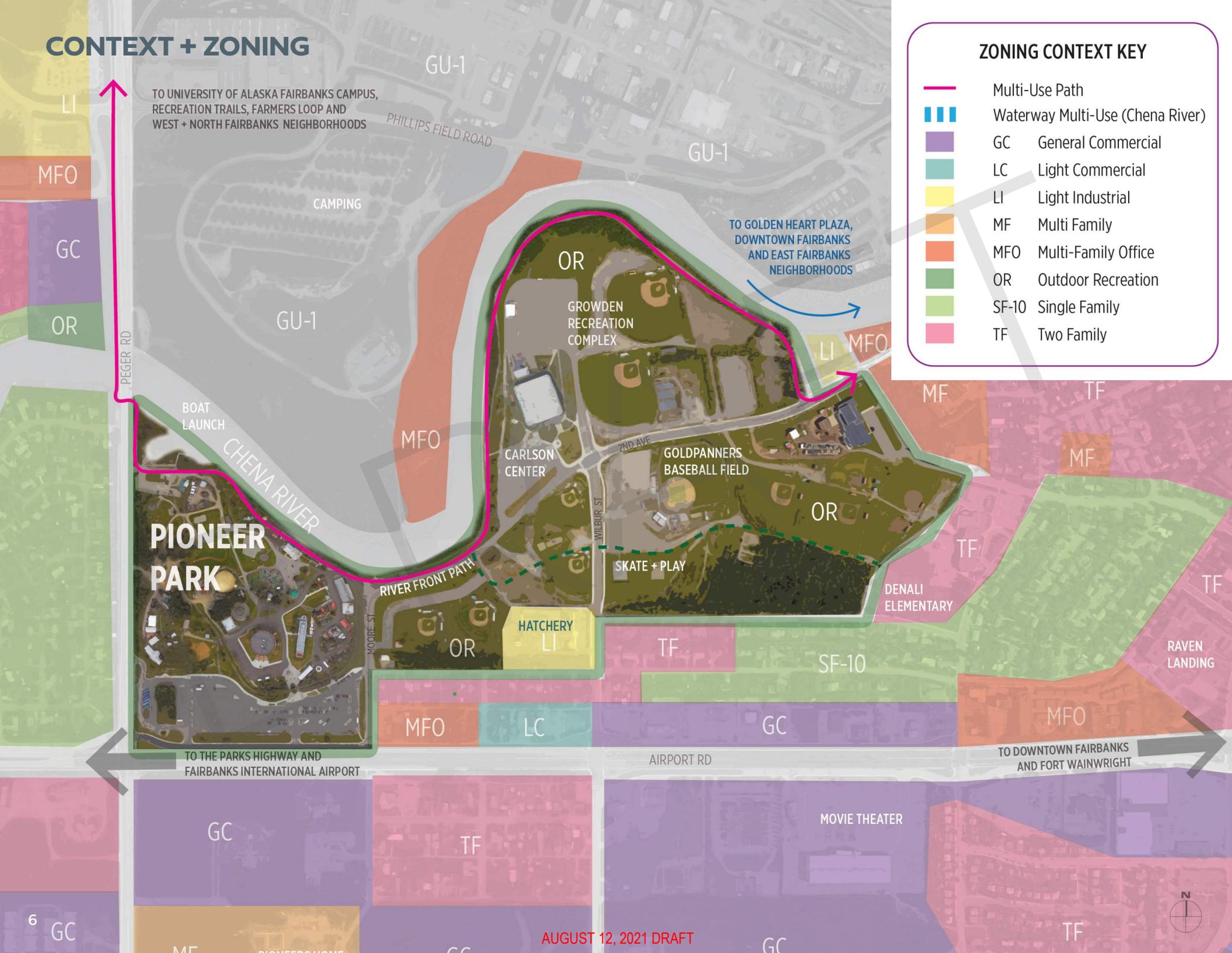
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DRAFT

CONTEXT + ZONING

ZONING CONTEXT KEY

-  Multi-Use Path
-  Waterway Multi-Use (Chena River)
-  GC General Commercial
-  LC Light Commercial
-  LI Light Industrial
-  MF Multi Family
-  MFO Multi-Family Office
-  OR Outdoor Recreation
-  SF-10 Single Family
-  TF Two Family



TO UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS CAMPUS,
RECREATION TRAILS, FARMERS LOOP AND
WEST + NORTH FAIRBANKS NEIGHBORHOODS

TO GOLDEN HEART PLAZA,
DOWNTOWN FAIRBANKS
AND EAST FAIRBANKS
NEIGHBORHOODS

TO THE PARKS HIGHWAY AND
FAIRBANKS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

TO DOWNTOWN FAIRBANKS
AND FORT WAINWRIGHT



Background and Purpose

Pioneer Park is located in Fairbanks, Alaska, on the bank of the Chena River (see aerial on page 4). Pioneer Park is a special and unique part of Fairbanks history, culture, and everyday life. The Park is deeply integrated into the lives of Fairbanks residents while also serving as a tourist destination for guests from all over the world. Approximately 350,000 people visit the park every year. The goal of this master plan is to build on the unique aspects of the park while improving its functionality, increasing revenue, and addressing critical maintenance needs. The plan is a 10+ year vision, with suggestions for short to long term changes that will help the park better serve Fairbanks residents and visitors alike.

Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) has contracted Bettisworth North to prepare a master plan for their 44-acre Pioneer Park facilities. The following document includes a phased approach for future development in the park, an assessment of its existing facilities, and a business plan to assist FNSB in their management of the park.

Executive Summary

To properly assess the current status of the park and to build a vision for its future, the master plan team sought out input from multiple stakeholder groups, completed visitor surveys, and interviewed park staff. A vision for the future of the park was developed over the course of multiple public and advisory group meetings.

Vision: Pioneer Park is a place of community pride in the heart of Fairbanks, showcasing unique features of the region's heritage in a way that captures the imagination and interest of people of all ages and ability, from near and far, in a dynamic environment that cultivates socialization, education, cultural exchange, and year-round play.

To meet this vision, the final master plan has been broken down into three development phases. Phase One includes all currently planned and funded improvements at the park. As we write this master plan, there are projects in motion for multiple improvements including, but

not limited to, a new park office and a new playground with an ice-skating loop. These projects are assumed completed for Phase Two of the plan.

Phase Two, approximately 5 to 10 years in the future, opens the park up to the riverfront and adds an a Multi-purpose Center to the northwest corner of the park.

Phase Three, 10+ years in the future, addresses the future of the Centennial Center and opens the park up to other concurrent recreation improvements planned for adjacent properties to the east.

The business plan outlines findings from a deep dive into the current business operations and makes suggestions for increasing future revenue, including minor increases to rental fees, new demonstrations, and new facilities, such as a brewery or distillery.

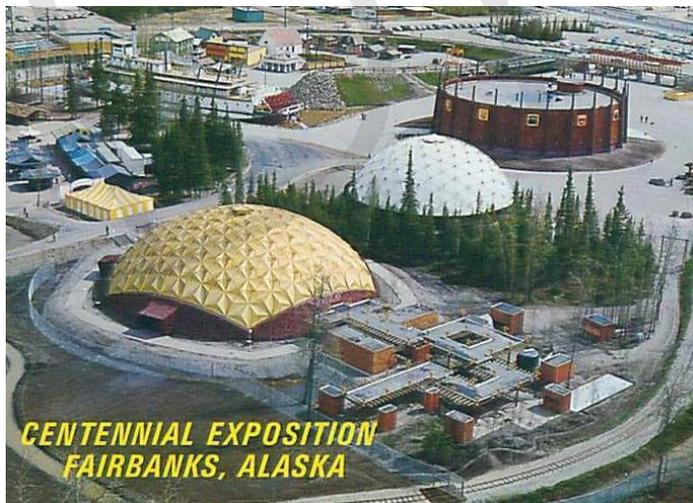
Location, Zoning, and Context

The Park is located on the banks of the Chena River, within biking distance of downtown via the Chena Riverwalk, and conveniently accessible by car via Airport Way and Peger Road. The Park is zoned as an Outdoor Recreation area. The Park is bounded by the Chena River to the north, Peger Road and residential development to the west, Airport Way to the south, and other FNSB properties to the east including several recreation fields, Growden Memorial Stadium, and the Carlson Center.

While zoned OR, the Salmon Bake is a use that is not permitted for that use. It operates under a concession/lease agreement with FNSB. As the vision of this master plan proposes uses that are also not permitted in the OR zone, and update or rezoning of the park, or portions of the park, should be performed prior to development.



An aerial view of Pioneer Park c.1967.

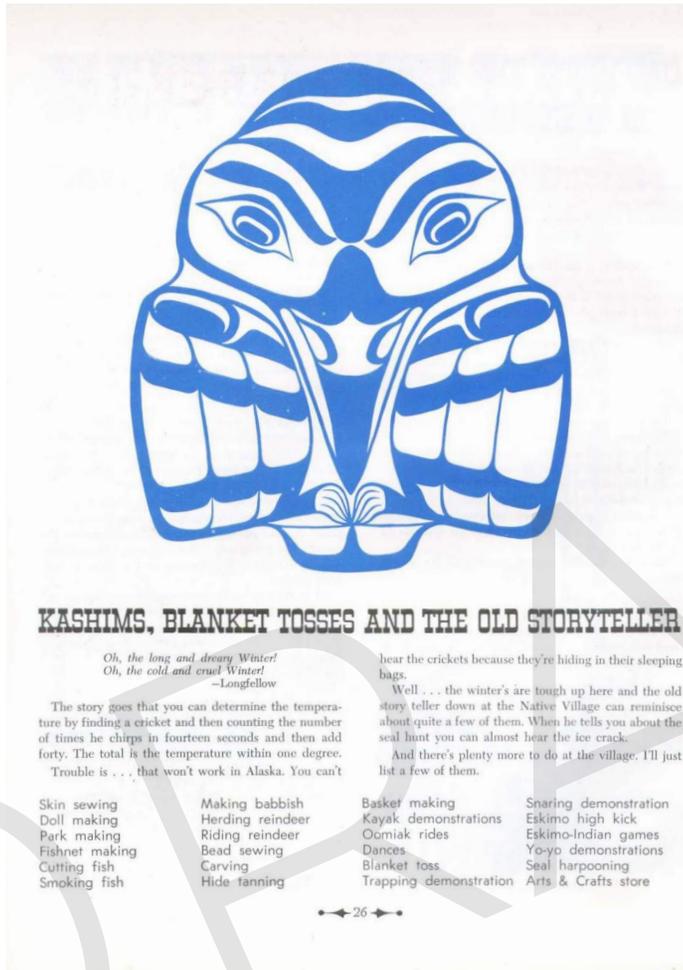


(Left) An Alaska Expo postcard sold at the exposition event.



(Right) The original train engine and cars in Mining Valley c.1967.

A page from the Alaska Exposition pamphlet advertising the attractions and events.



People watching the train cross over the main gate of the Alaska Exposition c.1967.



Park History

Pioneer Park was established in 1967 as the grounds for the Alaska '67 Centennial Exposition. The intent of the Exposition was to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the purchase of Alaska from Russia. The expo was promoted to bring "together the peoples of Alaska for their first really statewide party," and organizers expected at least 150,000 visitors from the Lower 48 to travel north for the event.

Originally dubbed "Alaskaland," the park included attractions like carnival rides and objects of historical significance that were organized into different themed areas in the park, establishing some of the areas still in use now, such as the Mining Valley. Multiple temporary structures were also constructed for the exposition event, including the Centennial Center. Expo organizers only had enough money in the budget to heat one side of the Centennial Center, but not the other, which was not considered an issue since the period of intended use was limited. The Nenana was floated onto the property along a trench dug from the Chena, and multiple log cabins and older structures from the original Fairbanks townsite and other sites nearby were relocated to the property.

Some of the themed areas of the park have been removed since it was established, such as the Alaska Wildlife Park and the Wilderness Park, and some structures have been added or moved, but the many of the original "temporary" structures are still in use and the park remains a popular attraction.

Alaskaland was renamed Pioneer Park in the early 2000s.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

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PARK ASSETS

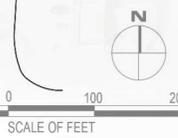


PARK ASSET KEY

- Multi-Use Path
- Waterway Multi-Use
- Rail Line
- Park Entrance
- Path Gathering Point
- Museum
- Pavilion
- Public Toilets
- Non-Motorized Circulation Areas
- Public Lawn + Play Areas
- Vegetated Area
- Public Parking
- Maintenance Area
- Building

Points of Interest

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Harding Rail Car | P1. Wilderness Pavilion |
| 2. SS Nenana | P2. Moose Creek Pavilion |
| 3. Centennial Center | P3. Playground Pavilion |
| 4. Kitty Hensley House | P4. Dance Pavilion |
| 5. Theater | B. Bocce Ball |
| 6. Pioneer Museum | FG. Frisbee Golf |
| 7. Pioneer Hall | MG. Mini-Golf |
| 8. Park Office | V. Volley Ball |
| 9. Gazebo | |
| 10. Carousel | |
| 11. Folk School | |
| 12. Rail Depot | |
| 13. Dance Hall | |
| 14. Air Museum | |
| 15. Playground | |
| 16. Folk School Woodshop | |
| 17. Kashim | |
| 18. Canoe Rental | |
| 19. Boat Launch | |
| 20. Salmon Bake | |



Existing Facilities

The following is an overview of the Park's existing facilities with a brief mention of their history and current use. The end of this chapter includes a key map and an executive summary of the physical and structural conditions of the buildings on the site. For further information about the current status of specific buildings, please see Appendix C – Facilities Assessment.

Native Village

Originally, the Native village included six structures built with traditional Alaska Native architectural techniques. Structures included kashims and a bark summer house. An Alaska Native Museum was added at a later date in the same area. All of the original structures are in poor condition and have been closed to the public for safety reasons. The Alaska Native Museum fell out of use and has been converted into a wood shop operated by the Folk School. Traditional Alaska Native totem poles still mark the Native Village area and one of the kashims may be salvageable for reconstruction and re-use.

Gold Rush Town Area

Gold Rush Town is comprised of a collection of buildings moved to the park from various locations in or around Fairbanks. A majority of the structures were moved to the site as part of the original exposition in 1967. In 1967, 29 buildings were moved to the site, including the First Presbyterian Church and the old Chena Hotel and Bath House. It is estimated that the oldest buildings in the collection date back to 1905. Many of the structures were in the path of ongoing development at the time and would have been demolished if they had not been relocated.

Gold Rush Town is currently the home of several food vendors and small gift shops. Low rent for structures in Gold Rush Town allows the park to act as an incubator for local small business ventures. The FNSB Pioneer Park Headquarters is located in Gold Rush Town, along with the Palace Theater and the Pioneer Museum.

Railroad

Originally named the "Crooked Creek and Whiskey Island Railroad," the Pioneer Park Railroad is comprised of a mile of track around the park and replicas of the original narrow gage trains that served as transport to the Alaska Interior. The one-mile loop was intended to bring riders back to the station after having experienced "a harrowing trip through

the wilds of Alaska." The train served approximately 30,000 riders in 2019 and the railroad and the associated Tanana Valley Railroad Museum are one of the main visitor attractions at the park.

Salmon Bake Area - Mining Valley

The Salmon Bake Area was originally called "Mining Valley," and houses most of the park's historical mining equipment. The Alaska Salmon Bake is owned and managed by the Winther Family, who manage both the Salmon Bake and the shows at the Palace Theater in Gold Rush Town. Like the railroad, the Alaska Salmon Bake is one of the park's main attractions. Alaska Salmon Bake owns a majority of the buildings in Mining Valley, which were therefore excluded from the facilities assessment performed as part of this master plan effort.

The Salmon Bake and the shows at the Palace Theater are open to all residents and visitors, but primarily serve cruise ship passengers who are bussed to Pioneer Park from local hotels.

Bartlett Plaza and the Centennial Center

The Centennial Center was constructed in 1966 as a temporary structure for the '67 Expo. It was designed by Don Stetson and includes Alaska Native totemic and mask designs by artists William Giersdorf, Duane Pasco, Bernard Katexac, Peter Seeganna, and Joseph Senungetuk.

While the Centennial Center was one of the largest buildings completed for the exposition, it was never intended to be a permanent part of the park and has faced ongoing issues due to aging structural elements.

A recent evaluation of the structural integrity of the glulam wood columns surrounding the exterior of the building found that, among many other issues, all of the main exterior columns will need to be replaced in the next few years. "The exterior columns have been in use for nearly fifty years. Over this period of time the columns have been subjected to extreme variations in temperature and moisture content. These variations contribute to checking, splitting, and delamination of the wood material, in turn, allowing additional moisture to penetrate the columns. To minimize the need for continual maintenance and eliminate the need for periodic repairs it is recommended that all building columns be replaced."

The Centennial Center currently serves a valuable purpose in the community as one of the only mid-sized indoor event centers in the Fairbanks area.

SITE CIRCULATION - SUMMER



SUMMER CIRCULATION KEY

- Primary Non-Motorized Path
- Multi-Use Trail
- - - Waterway Mixed-Use
- - - Rail Line
- - - Maintenance Access Path
- P Summer Public Vehicle Traffic
- - - P Vendor Parking + Route (mornings)
- P Bus Parking + Route
- Vehicle Drop off
- Park Entrance
- Path Gathering Point
- Non-Motorized Circulation Areas
- Public Lawn + Play Areas
- Vegetated Area
- Maintenance Area
- Building - Active

Points of Interest

1. Park Office
2. Maintenance Yard
3. Laydown yard

* See pages 16 and 17 for a winter circulation map and a brief discussion of site circulation patterns.

The adjacent Bartlett Plaza provides space for outdoor events and markets during the summer and a parking lot in the winter. See the following site circulation section for a discussion of the winter vs. summer circulation in Bartlett Plaza.

Gold Dome

The 100' diameter, gold, geodesic dome near the Centennial Center was originally built to house exposition displays showcasing "federal involvement with agriculture, environmental research, transportation and communications, commercial development, and natural resources." Now displaying airplanes and other historically significant aviation items, the dome is the home of the Pioneer Air Museum.

Open Space and Outdoor Recreation

Pioneer Park is a wonderful place to enjoy the outdoors. The following is a brief overview of existing outdoor facilities and recreation areas at the Park.

Chena River

Tucked in the northwest corner of the site there is small parking lot with river access for small water craft. Canoe Alaska operates out of a building on the east edge of the parking lot. Canoe Alaska rents out kayaks and canoes and runs a shuttle service to pick up customers at take-out locations downriver.

River access at this location is complicated by the fact that the river has silted in the area so much that the dock the Park has used in the past cannot be properly placed in its usual location. The bank is treacherous and muddy and vehicular circulation is undefined.

Pavilions and Gazebos

There are currently four pavilions and a gazebo located in Pioneer Park. The structures are available to rent for a small fee and are in regular use for functions like birthday parties, drum circles, and even dance classes. None of these structures are in regular use in the winter.

The Moose Creek pavilion is a popular location for summer concerts due to its proximity to a lawn area where concertgoers can spread out blankets and sit in the sun while listening to the music.

Playground

Except for a new interactive play feature recently installed near the Carousel, the existing playground facilities at Pioneer Park are aging and in poor condition. They are not inclusive or accessible for all users, some equipment does not meet current safety standards, and there are drainage issues in at least one of the play areas. Current Park plans include a playground renovation that will address all of the above issues, will be designed to encourage year-round use, and will act as a destination to attract visitors. The concept design for the new playground is complete and FNSB is in the process of gathering funding for the final design and construction. For the purposes of this master plan, it is assumed that the new playground will be completed within the next five years.

Maintenance and Lay-down yards

Pioneer Park staff have access to two maintenance areas on site. There is a fenced maintenance yard with several structures located in the northwest corner of the park and a lay-down yard for larger materials and storage of gravel and mulch on the west edge of the park near Peger Road.

While the maintenance areas generally serve the current needs of the park, there are a few notable issues with both locations.

- No potable water is available in either location for park staff use.
- Both locations are not convenient to access by vehicle and are on the opposite side of the park from the park office.
- Unorganized parking is available in both locations, but the vehicular access sometimes conflicts with pedestrian circulation.
- The lay-down yard is not fenced and park users are able to walk into the area at will.

SITE CIRCULATION - WINTER



WINTER CIRCULATION KEY

- Primary Non-Motorized Path
- Rail Line
- In-Park Public Vehicle Traffic
- Public Vehicle Traffic
- Maintenance Access Path
- Park Entrance
- Path Gathering Point
- Pedestrian Path/Snow Storage
- Public Lawn + Play Areas (unused)
- Lawn - Uncleared in Winter
- Maintenance Area
- Building - Active
- Building - Closed

Points of Interest

1. Park Office
2. Maintenance Yard
3. Laydown yard
4. Centennial Center
5. Dance Hall
6. Pioneer Hall
7. Gold Dome
8. Folk School
9. Folk School Shop

* See pages 14 for the summer circulation map.



Utilities

Due to the temporary nature of the original exposition facilities and additions to the utility network over the years, the location of existing water, sewer, electric, and communications lines are uncertain. Per the current Interior Gas Utility distribution map, no gas lines are located on Pioneer Park Property. A utility map for the site does exist but has been found to be inaccurate in several instances. A detailed analysis of utilities and a plan for improvements is recommended in order to meet this master plan's goals.

Circulation

Vehicular Circulation and Parking

As shown in the vehicular circulation and parking figures, vehicle use patterns on site vary significantly from season to season. In the summer, vehicular traffic inside the park is mostly restricted to park staff and business owners. In the winter, the public uses Bartlett Plaza as a parking lot for events in the Centennial Center, and there is additional public vehicular traffic within the park associated with smaller organizations and venues throughout the park such as the Square Dance Hall and the Folk School. In the summer, most of the public parking associated with the Centennial Center and other venues occurs in the main parking lot on the south edge of the property along Airport Way. Parking is allowed within the park in the winter to limit travel distances from vehicles to venues.

The park office also draws internal vehicular circulation in both summer and winter. The office is located in Gold Rush Town and vehicular access to the office conflicts with the pedestrian environment of Gold Rush Town.

Existing vehicular circulation on the site conflicts with pedestrian circulation and creates an unsafe environment for park users. Because vehicular circulation patterns change in the winter, the potential conflict between pedestrians and vehicles alters, but still remains an issue.

Bus Parking

Pull-through bus parking is provided in the main parking lot in the southwest corner of the site. This is convenient to the Salmon Bake area, which draws a majority of the bus traffic to the site.

Emergency Service Access

Emergency service vehicles are able to access all facilities within the park.

Public Transportation

Pioneer Park is served by the Blue Line of the Metropolitan Area Commuter System (MACS). Other stops on the Blue Line include the Carlson Center, the Noel Wien Library, Downtown, and UAF.

Non-motorized Circulation

In the summer, Pioneer Park is primarily a pedestrian environment. Strolling through the park is in itself a pleasurable activity, one that many Fairbanks residents take advantage of on a routine basis for health and exercise. Non-motorized circulation in the park is not limited to the walkways. People use the walkways and the open fields for walking and for riding on bikes, scooters, longboards and more. Vehicular circulation in the park is limited in the summer, which allows children free reign of the play areas and turns Gold Rush Town into a quaint shopping district. As mentioned earlier, although winter brings changes in vehicular traffic circulation, conflict between non-motorized and vehicular use remains.

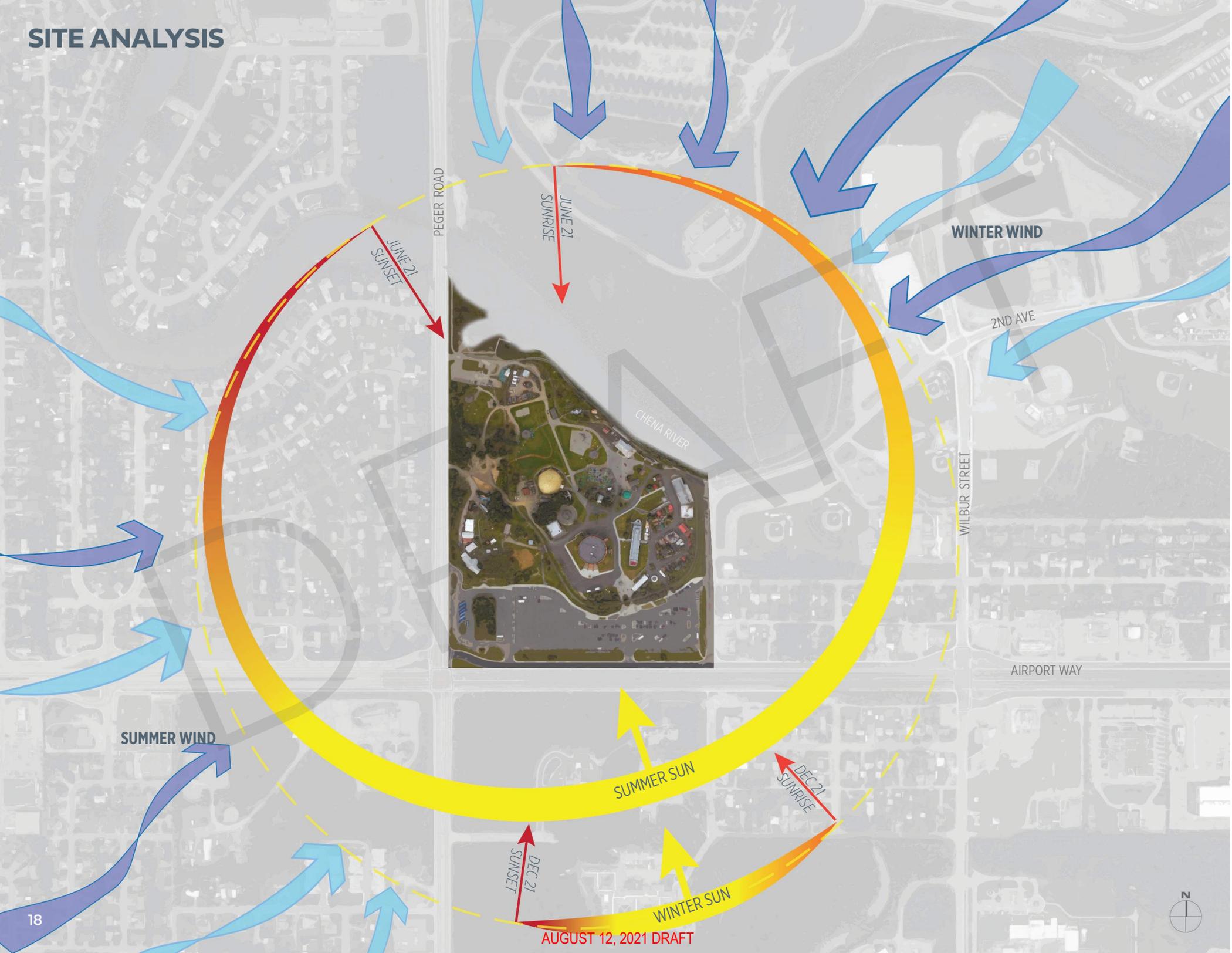
The Chena Riverwalk connects Pioneer Park directly to the Carlson Center, ball fields, a dog park, the Morris Thompson Cultural & Visitor Center, and Downtown Fairbanks. The Riverwalk is made up of 3.5 miles of connected sections of sidewalk and multi-modal paths along the edge of the Chena River. Bike racks scattered throughout the park allow visitors on bikes to travel the path and pause for a while to enjoy the park.

Many of the paved walkways and boardwalks in Pioneer Park are in disrepair. Deterioration due to age or tree roots has broken up pavement or boardwalks, making the paths inaccessible for elders and people with disabilities.

Wayfinding

No wayfinding plan exists for the park. There are maps posted at the main south entry and at the smaller northeast entry, but the maps are not in strategic locations and are often overlooked. No visual cues indicate main travel routes or mark different areas of the park. A future wayfinding assessment and plan for the park is recommended in order to meet this master plan's goals.

SITE ANALYSIS



WINTER WIND

SUMMER WIND

SUMMER SUN

WINTER SUN

CHENA RIVER

PEGER ROAD

WILBUR STREET

AIRPORT WAY

JUNE 21
SUNSET

JUNE 21
SUNRISE

DEC 21
SUNRISE

DEC 21
SUNSET

AUGUST 12, 2021 DRAFT



Natural Features

Topography and Drainage

Located on the banks of the Chena River, Pioneer Park is on a flat, historical floodplain with topography that generally slopes toward the river. Since the construction of the upstream levee, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) considers the park to be an “area with reduced flood risk” or “Zone X”. This designation means that the park is located downstream from an accredited levee system and is only considered at risk under extreme and unlikely circumstances.

Vegetation

To be expanded - existing conditions include invasive tree species *Prunus padus*.

Climate

Fairbanks is famous for its cold weather and its extreme temperature differential between seasons. Visitors in the summer enjoy beautiful, sunny and warm conditions with occasional afternoon thunderstorms. Winters are perfect for outdoor winter sports like ice skating and dog mushing.

The Park has a variety of microclimates, cool and shady treed areas and warmer open lawns. Solar access in the winter is limited due to shade cast by site features and structures on the south edge of the site.

Applicable Plans and Policies

Future development represented in this document shall adhere to City of Fairbanks and Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) codes, ordinances, and planning documents. Some of the resources and guiding documents for this plan include the following:

- City of Fairbanks Building Code: <https://www.fairbanksalaska.us/building/page/building-code-information>
- FNSB Building and Zoning Codes: <https://fnsb.borough.codes/>
- Relevant planning documents to consider are:
- Chena Riverfront Plan: <https://www.fnsb.gov/DocumentCenter/View/897/Chena-Riverfront-Plan-PDF>
- Chena Riverbend Master Plan (website)
- FNSB Recreational Trails Plan (Currently under development)
- Airport Way Design Toolkit & Site-Specific Recommendations (2018): https://fastplanning.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/airportwayplan_final.pdf
- “Connect Fairbanks” Non-Motorized Plan (2021): <https://fastplanning.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Connect-Fairbanks-Plan-Final.pdf>

Additionally, state and federal agencies may require permitting depending on the location of development as it relates to the Chena River. Relevant entities to consult are:

- The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (AKDEC) Stormwater Guide contains information and best management practices (BMPs) for long term site erosion and sediment control: <http://dec.alaska.gov/water/wastewater/stormwater/guidance/>.
- The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) issues fish habitat permits related to docks and ramps (https://adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=uselicense.streambank_permits). ADFG also has a program that focuses on streambank restoration.
- Other agency coordination and permitting entities to include in future development are:
 - The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) <http://dnr.alaska.gov/>
 - The US Army Corps of Engineers Alaska District (AKCOE) <https://www.usace.army.mil/>



(Left) Pioneer Park Main Entry.



(Right) The carousel already had a long history when it was brought up for the Exposition, and may be well over 100 years old.



(Left) The Tanana Valley Rail Road in action.



(Right) Participants on the annual Pioneer Park Bathtub Races.



(Left) The St. Michael's Kashim is not longer open to the public due to its deteriorating condition.

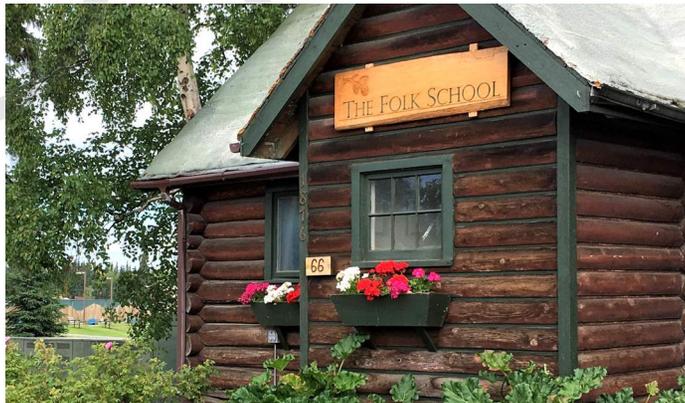


(Right) The Moose Creek Pavilion.

The Centennial Center fills a gap in mid-sized event spaces in Fairbanks. Due to its age and the extreme climate conditions in Fairbanks, the Centennial Center is currently facing deteriorating structural conditions which are in turn causing possible safety issues and high maintenance costs.



(Left) The Folk School operates out of two buildings in the Park. The photo to the left is one of their facilities in near the Centennial Center.



(Right) A photo of the interior of the Gold Dome. The Gold Dome currently houses the Pioneer Air Museum.



Recent Financial History

The following analysis is based on budget figures within the Business Plan provided in Table 5 of Appendix B.

Revenue

Park revenue increased by 10% from \$225,041 in FY2018 to \$247,813 in FY2019. Revenue declined by 42% from FY2019 to FY2020 due to the cancellation of the 2020 Alaska cruise season and significantly lower independent visitation to Fairbanks.

Concessions

Concession revenue typically accounts for nearly half of annual park revenue and comes from two sources: cabin leases (primarily retail and food service businesses) and other site leases, including the Crooked Creek and Whiskey Island Railroad, Alaska Salmon Bake & Palace Theatre, Pioneer Air Museum, Canoe Alaska, and Roela's Carousel. Concession leases generated \$100,800 in FY2018 and \$112,368 in FY2019.

Due to COVID-19, concession revenue declined by 47% from FY2019 to FY2021 and accounted for 42% of total revenue. There are six other leases that do not generate revenue, including leases with the Fairbanks Arts Association, Folk School of Fairbanks, Kitty Hensley House (Pioneers of Alaska), Northern Lights Council of Dancers, Pioneer Museum (Pioneers of Alaska), and Wickersham House.

Centennial Center and Train

After concessions, the next most significant revenue sources are the Centennial Center and the train. The Centennial Center generated \$38,800 in FY2019, while the train generated \$37,800 in FY2019.

Rentals

Other sources of revenue included RV parking (\$12,500 in FY2019), picnic shelter rental (\$10,300 in FY2019), equipment rental (\$5,300 in FY2019), and church rental (\$5,100 in FY2019). Palace Theatre and Pioneer Hall rentals also contributed a small amount of revenue. Revenue derived from electricity is cost recovery from lease holders and not earned revenue.

Expenses

The most significant Park expense, by far, is payroll and benefits, accounting for 70% to 72% of total expenses from FY2018 through FY2020. Contractual services (primarily security services) represented 14% of expenses. Maintenance and general supplies each accounted for 4%, and all other expenses combined accounted for the remaining 6%.

Cost Recovery

Expenses exceeded revenue by slightly more than \$1 million in FY2018, nearly \$1.2 million in FY2019, and slightly more than \$1.2 million in FY2020. By percentage, annual cost recovery was 17%, 17%, and 11%, respectively. As of May FY2021, park management estimates FY2021 cost recovery is 13%.

Park Assets

The following is a brief overview of park assets and challenges pulled from the Business Plan. For more details, see Appendix B. This assessment is based on site visit observations, public workshops, executive interview research, and preliminary survey results.

Park Assets:

- Significant Community Support -- The park is held in high regard by community residents.
- Popular Fairbanks Visitor Attraction -- Pioneer Park is one of the top visitor attractions in Fairbanks.
- Family Friendly Outdoor Recreation -- The park is considered a family-friendly, safe, and clean space and is used heavily by local families.
- Location -- The park's location provides easy access for community members as well as visitors.
- Ample Parking -- Pioneer Park has a very large parking area that makes it convenient for visitor and resident use of the park.
- National Historic Landmarks and Historical Assets -- Pioneer Park has multiple historical assets, including the SS Nenana, the Harding Railway Car, historic cabins, and many museum artifacts and displays.
- Mutual Benefits from Non-Profit Organizations -- Non-profit activities bring people to the park that may not otherwise visit.
- Undeveloped Space -- The park has adequate space for

new developments. The northwest portion of the park near the Chena River may be particularly appealing for future development.

- Meeting and Exhibit Space -- Meeting, exhibit, and performance spaces are limited in Fairbanks. The park fills gaps in community demand for these types of facilities.
- Park Events -- The Park hosts an estimated 1,700 events annually. The top events draw 2,000 to 6,000 people each. Pre-COVID, event attendance is estimated to have reached 50,000 to 55,000, or roughly 15% of total annual park visitation. Events provide liveliness and a positive atmosphere.

Park Challenges

Poor Infrastructure Maintenance and Compliance

As discovered in the Facility Inventory Assessment, addressing park infrastructure physical deficiencies, safety, and access should be a top priority. Additionally, interviewees mentioned issues related to the general appearance of the park and the need to preserve artifacts. Appendix B includes a selection of interviewee comments regarding the park's condition.

Unless the park is well-maintained and its appearance is improved, it will be challenging to significantly increase visitation, particularly among visitors that expect a high-quality experience.

Lacking Vitality

Interviewees mentioned static displays, a lack of activities, and the feeling that the park can seem empty. Selected comments reflect these impressions noting that the park "feels empty," is "static," and is "kind of boring."

Controversial Park Name

The executive interviews, advisory committee meetings, public meetings, and surveys revealed there is conflict regarding the name "Pioneer Park." Too many community members find the name not inclusive, alienating the region's Alaska Native people. Some people liked the old name, Alaskaland; however, it has a false connotation of a theme park.

No Common Theme or Brand

The park's current brand identity is tied to how individuals and businesses use the park, overlaid with different perspectives of the local market compared to the visitor market. Additionally, the name of the park is a significant barrier to establishing a common brand identity. For example, organizations such as arts and historic preservation groups view the park in respect to their activities, while many residents view the park from a recreation and food service perspective. Prior to arriving at the park, visitors expect a historical program, and perhaps the salmon bake.

Not Competitive with Other Attractions

Other than the Salmon Bake, the park is not competitive with other attractions in large tour group packaging. Several factors contribute to the lack of interest in the park. The overall volume of available activities that may appeal to their clients is minimal, and two of the park's key features (river boat and mining history) are well represented in existing high-quality tours (Riverboat Discovery and Gold Dredge 8). An additional factor is that most package tour visitors spend limited time in Fairbanks. They typically arrive late on day 1, then take a tour on day 2 (Riverboat, Gold Dredge, etc.), returning late in the day. Some portion of package tour visitors participate in the Salmon Bake and the Palace Theatre production, while others return to their hotel and depart Fairbanks the next day.

Capacity to Grow Park Events and Activities

While a net positive for the park, events take a considerable amount of staff time to coordinate and typically do not result in significant revenue. However, the recent addition of an event coordinator is expected to be helpful in supporting current park staff to develop and manage more or bigger events.

High Labor Costs

Park labor costs are about 70% of all expenses. This percentage is high because staff are Borough employees, earning higher pay and larger benefit packages than would typically be paid by similar facility that was privately owned.

FACILITY ASSESSMENT MAP



FACILITIES KEY

- 1 Pioneer Home
- 2 Palace Hotel
- 3 Log 1-Story
- 4 Log 1-Story
- 5 Log 1-Story
- 6 Log 1-Story
- 8 Log 1-Story
- 9 Log 1-Story
- 10 Log 1-Story
- 11 Wood Framed 2-Story
- 12 Log 1-Story
- 13 Log 1-Story
- 14 Log 1-Story
- 15 Church
- 16 Log 1-Story
- 17 Log/Wood Framed 1-Story
- 18 Palace Saloon
- 19 Park Office
- 21 Log Restrooms
- 22 Log/Framed 1-Story
- 23 Log/Framed 1-Story
- 24 Wood Framed 1-Story
- 25 Log 1-Story
- 26 Log 1-Story
- 27 Log 1-Story
- 28 Log 1-Story
- 29 Log 1-Story
- 30 Log 1-Story
- 31 Log/Framed 1-1/2 Story
- 31A Log 1-Story
- 32 Log Restrooms
- 35 Folk School Shop - CMU
- 35A Log 1-Story
- 36 St. Michael's Log Kashim
- 37 Kashim - Underground
- 40 Log Restrooms
- 41 Long Shed
- 43 Middle Shed
- 44 Monkey Shed - Log 1-Story
- 46 Garden Shed
- 47 Red Barn
- 48 Framed White House
- 64 Log 1-Story
- 66 Log 2-Story w/CMU Basement
- 69 Wood Framed 1-Story
- 99 Wickersham House
- ? Salmon Bake Storage Log 1-Story
- 100 Centennial Center
- 101 Gold Dome
- 102 River Boat Nenana
- 103 Square Dance Hall
- 104 Train House Museum
- 105 Train Depot (Old Museum)
- 106 Yurkovich Shed
- 107 Train Tunnel
- 108 Mining Tunnel
- 109 Harding Railroad Car
- 110 Harding Railroad Car Shelter
- 111 Gazebo
- 112 Shelter - Citizen's Mill
- 113 Shelter - Wilderness Picnic
- 114 Shelter - Moose Creek Picnic
- 115 Shelter - Playground Picnic
- 116 Shelter - Square Dance Park
- 117 Shelter - Wood Cutting Truck
- 118 Warm Storage Building
- 119 Connex - Near Gold Dome
- 120 Water Tower
- 121 Storage Shed by Cone
- 122 -40 Building
- 123 Carousel Shack
- 124 Sluice
- 125 Dock
- 126 Playground - School Age
- 127 Playground - Preschool Age
- 128 Marquee Sign
- 129 Twin Beech Plane
- 130 Water Monitor
- 131 Information Booth
- 132 Lavelle Young Wheelhouse
- 160 Box Car

Facilities Assessment

Overview

The facilities assessment effort for this project included a majority of the structures within the boundaries of Pioneer Park. (See Appendix C)

Facilities not assessed as part of this effort are either new, like the Train Museum, are under recent study, such as the recent work done on the Centennial Center and the Gold Dome, or are temporary structures that are mainly used for convenience and/or storage. For a list of buildings not included in this assessment, please see [Appendix *X* - Facilities Not Included in This Assessment](#).

Facility Improvements In-Process

Some of the facility improvements in-process include the following projects:

- Rehabilitation of the Nenana
- Stabilization of structural elements of the Centennial Center
- Redesign and replacement of the playground
- Cabin foundation and accessibility improvements
- Restroom updates and renovation

These in-process improvements are included in Phase 1 of the park master plan, and are assumed complete for Phases 2 and 3.

Facility Assessment Results Summary

[Pending input from Design Alaska.](#)

A rough order of magnitude cost estimate to complete the recommended repairs to the Gold Rush Town cabins is included in the Implementation section of this master plan.

See Appendix C – Facilities Assessment for further details.



MASTER PLAN PROCESS

MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS 29

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND OUTREACH 29

BUSINESS PLAN PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY 30

DRAFT



Master Plan Development Process

The Pioneer Park Master Plan defines a vision for what the Park should be and guides future development, operations, and management to best serve the Fairbanks community and visitors. To develop a successful plan, an iterative dialogue with the community, Pioneer Park stakeholders, and the planning team was undertaken over nine months. Development of the Master Plan was comprised of four primary interdependent components:

1. A Facility Assessment and Inventory (see the Existing Conditions chapter and Appendix C)
2. Community Involvement and Outreach
3. A Business Plan
4. Concept Development and Master Plan (see the Master Plan chapter and Appendix F)

This section addresses the Community Involvement and Outreach effort. And the Business Plan methodology. The other three components are addressed in the Appendices and the Existing Conditions and Master Plan chapters.

Community Involvement and Outreach

Engagement with the public is essential to the long-term success of the Pioneer Park Master Plan. Meaningful public involvement ensures that the future management and development of the Park is consistent with the desires of the community. Pioneer Park is a valued historical and recreational resource for the Fairbanks community that residents have enjoyed for decades. Since its inception, Pioneer Park has undergone gradual changes and residents have unique memories that inform their ideas and opinions of what the future of the park could be.

The development of the Master Plan incorporates and reflects the community's vision for Pioneer Park through multiple engagement opportunities and included the following:

- 4 Advisory Committee Meetings
- 2 Public Workshops
- 1 Park User/Visitor Survey at Pioneer Park
- 1 Park User online survey
- # Stakeholder Interviews (pending input from McKinley)

All meeting summaries and outreach materials are included as [Appendix E - Public Involvement Meeting Materials and Summaries](#).

Outreach and Social Media

The project team conducted outreach throughout the planning process to inform residents about the Master Plan update, to notify the public of engagement opportunities such as public workshops and surveys and to encourage participation through email comments, phone conversations and in-person visits to Pioneer Park. Social media and targeted and direct outreach were used to promote workshops, advertise surveys and solicit input. The FNSB Parks & Recreation Facebook page was the primary source of social media posts that were then shared by individuals on the project team. Facebook events were created and boosted to advertise public workshops to reach a large cross-section of Fairbanks residents.

Project updates and invitations to participate were emailed to individuals, organizations, and stakeholders throughout the plan development process.

A project-specific website www.fairbankspioneerparkplan.com was created and regularly updated to provide a one-stop portal for information on the Master Plan update. It was the primary resource shared with interested members of the public, providing links to relevant resources and, most importantly, providing direct opportunities to participate in the process. The project website was referenced in all social media, email, and print methods of outreach.

Advisory Committee

A six-member Advisory Committee (AC) served as the steering committee for the planning process. The AC was representative of stakeholder groups and individuals from the business, planning, recreation, tourism, Alaska Native, and youth communities. These individuals were selected by the FNSB Mayor and Parks & Recreation staff. Members had various interests, skills, and experiences which encouraged broader conversation and understanding.

The goals of the AC were to: (1) refine the issues to be addressed, (2) develop a vision and direction for Pioneer Park based on community input, and (3) build consensus on guiding principles for future programming, design, and management recommendations.

Three meetings with the AC guided the project team through plan development. Results of the AC meetings, in addition to the public workshops and other input methods, directly informed the recommendations made in this plan as well as the accompanying strategic business plan.

Public Workshops

The planning team hosted two public workshops at key project milestones to gather input, identify issues and opportunities, and solicit feedback from members of the public. The first workshop was held during the initial visioning, issue, and opportunity identification phase. Community members were encouraged to share what they like about Pioneer Park, what they would change, and what their dream for the Park's future is. Feedback from that workshop steered the development of the Park's vision, goals, and intent statements.

Business Plan Process and Methodology

The Business Plan in its entirety may be found in Appendix B. The following is a brief overview of the methodology of the business plan team. Because the business plan includes discussion of several key drivers in the development of this master plan, excerpts from the Business Plan appear throughout this master plan.

Review of Current Park Operations

To develop a baseline understanding of current park operations, McKinley Research Group first conducted a review of the following:

- Marketing collateral, including website, advertisements, and brochures
- Financial data, including historical and current revenue and expenses
- Visitation data, including estimates by market segment and season
- Park events
- Operational documents, including list of concessions, lease agreements, and other program data.

Executive Interview Research

Executive interviews were conducted with 20 key contacts, including representatives of the visitor industry, nonprofit and arts organizations, park concessionaires, hoteliers, and Explore Fairbanks. The purpose of the interviews was to gather perceptions of current operations, areas for improvement, and suggestions for new opportunities. A list of interviewees is found in Appendix B. Throughout the plan, verbatim comments are provided in support of McKinley Research Group's analysis.

Park Advisory Committee and Public Input

McKinley Research Group participated in one of the three Park Advisory Committee meetings, and presented operational data on attendance, financial statements, and opportunities to enhance revenue. Public town hall meetings were also held, during which residents offered viewpoints on a vision for Pioneer Park and other suggestions for park improvement.

Online Surveys

Two online surveys were developed to gather resident and visitor opinions and park usage behavior. The surveys were launched in May and will gather information through the end of August.

Pioneer Park User Survey – This survey was designed to gather current resident and visitor experience, activities, and spending during their park visit. The survey was accessed by a QR code posted throughout the park.

Pioneer Park Resident Survey – This survey was similar to the User survey, but allowed residents to participate without using the QR code posted at the park. A survey link was available on the Pioneer Park Master Plan project website and the FNSB Parks and Recreation website. Residents were directed to the website through social media and other forms of community engagement throughout the project.

Preliminary survey data was analyzed and incorporated into this preliminary business assessment. A full report of the survey findings will be included in the final Master Plan submitted in September.

Fairbanks Visitor Data

The public involvement team drew upon several sources to help describe Fairbanks' visitor markets: the Alaska Visitor Statistics Program conducted by McDowell Group for the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development; and Fairbanks bed tax revenues provided by Explore Fairbanks.

Site Visit Notes

Public Involvement team members conducted a site visit in mid-May 2021 that informed current conditions and potential future plans for Pioneer Park. The site visit findings were taken into consideration in the Potential New Sources of Revenue section of this study.

**final illustrated master plan
will be placed here upon
approval of the following
phasing plans**



MASTER PLAN

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MASTER PLAN ZONES

STRENGTHENING USE + IDENTITY
THROUGHOUT THE PARK

CHENA HERITAGE PARK

RIVER CONNECTION
COMMUNITY FOCUSED
NATIVE + CULTURAL RECREATION
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

MINING VALLEY

ALASKA SALMON BAKE
FOCUSED EXHIBITS ON HISTORIC
MINING EQUIPMENT + METHODS

ALASKA REGIONS PLAYGROUND

INCLUSIVE PLAY SPACE FOR ALL AGES
YEAR ROUND-PROGRAMMING

TANANA VALLEY RAIL ROAD

TURN OF THE CENTURY RAIL MUSEUM
TRANSPORT LOOP AROUND THE PARK

GOLD RUSH TOWN

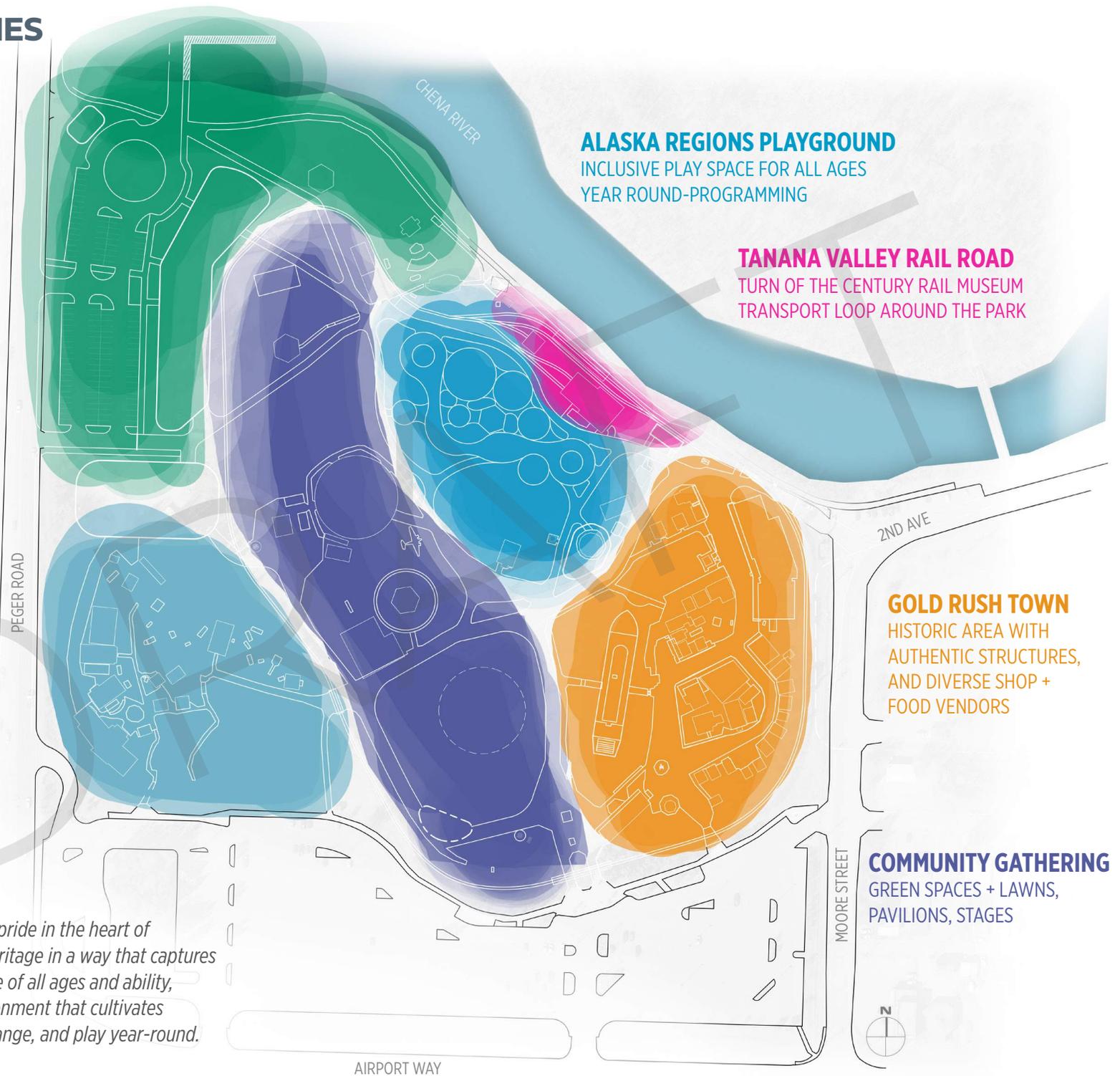
HISTORIC AREA WITH
AUTHENTIC STRUCTURES,
AND DIVERSE SHOP +
FOOD VENDORS

COMMUNITY GATHERING

GREEN SPACES + LAWNS,
PAVILIONS, STAGES

VISION STATEMENT

Pioneer Park is a place of community pride in the heart of Fairbanks, showcasing the region's heritage in a way that captures the imagination and interest of people of all ages and ability, from near and far, in a dynamic environment that cultivates socialization, education, cultural exchange, and play year-round.



Overview

The Pioneer Park Master Plan defines a long-term vision for what the Park should be and provides actionable recommendations for how it may best serve the needs of Fairbanks residents and visitors, now and into the future. The plan is a product of community engagement and close collaboration with park managers and local stakeholders. It embodies the community's desires to gather, learn, play and celebrate in an engaging public space that honors the region's heritage.

As part of this effort, the park was broken out into separate functional zones. (See "Master Plan Zones" figure.)

The new park zones are:

- Alaska Regions Playground
- Tanana Valley Rail Road
- Chena Heritage Park
- Community Gathering
- Gold Rush Town
- Mining Valley

These areas will see a number of improvements, listed in the following pages. By breaking the park up into distinct zones, programming, funding, community engagement and support can focus into distinct areas of participation. This also creates manageable resources that can be marketed independently and function under their own distinct identities; simplifying outreach and marketing for the owner, vendors, and the public.

Vision Statement

The vision statement declares where the community wants to be. It is the guiding theme of the concept development and business plan processes and is at the core of implementation recommendations. The vision statement is a compilation of the contributions made during the master planning process by members of the Advisory Committee, participants in public workshops, members of the public who provided input, and other Pioneer Park stakeholders.

Pioneer Park is a place of community pride in the heart of Fairbanks, showcasing the region's heritage in a way that captures the imagination and interest of people of all ages and ability, from near and far, in a dynamic environment that cultivates socialization, education, cultural exchange, and play year-round.

Core Tenants of the Plan

- The park is a valuable space for both residents and visitors.
- It's evolution has been gradual, and a blend of both deliberate and improvisational planning efforts. These changes occurring as a result of environmental, social and economic pressures.
- Like any good journey, we're more likely to arrive at our destination with one hand on the rudder and an eye on the horizon
- Preceding Master plan efforts have investigated the strengths and weakness of the park; analyzing its functionality internally and how it relates to the community at large.
- This master plan seeks to set functional, manageable and attainable goals, that are in line with the values identified by the management, and during the public and advisory work sessions.

Goals

Building on the key takeaways from the public engagement and the community's guiding vision for Pioneer Park, more specific goals and targeted intent statements were identified to direct the Master Plan. The following common themes, goals and intent statements are intended to implement the overall vision for Pioneer Park and reflect the community's values.

Pride:

The Park is a place the community is proud of, invests in, and celebrates.

- Manage and promote the park as an important asset.
- Establish the park as the preferred location for regional and local events of all types and scales; social, entertainment, Centennial and recreational.
- Foster a strong sense of community ownership and pride in the Park.
- Expand inclusivity so the Park is welcoming to all peoples.
- Have the name of the Park reflect the identity of our community.

Park Users:

The Park is enjoyed by residents and tourists of all ages and abilities, year-round.

- Create a family oriented space.
- Attract new visitors & increase visitor return frequency.
- Improve flexibility and responsiveness to seasonal demands.
- Foster a stronger youth-focus.
 - Increase programming and recreation opportunities for adolescents.
 - Established a youth advisory committee
- Improve accessibility
 - Bring facilities into compliance with ADA and FNSB design standards
 - Improve on-site navigation & wayfinding

History & Heritage:

The Park is an immersive, educational and entertaining place to experience regional history and cultural heritage.

- Incorporate culturally relevant and regionally representative activities.
- Feature Alaska Native programming, performances, art, and cultural museum experiences
- Maintain historical character while improving structures and features for lasting enjoyment and expanding use.
 - Balance the need to come into compliance with code, the demand for modern accommodations and amenities, and the retention of historic character and honoring heritage.
- Continue programming featuring SS Nenana and Gold Rush Town.
- Expand features to include history that has happened since 1967 when the park was established

Location:

The Parks is an accessible destination in the heart of Fairbanks, connected to and supporting active public spaces, on the banks of the Chena River.

- Expand the relationship with the Chena River and feature it as an asset.
 - Promote Chena River as part of our heritage.
 - Improve access to the Chena River and promote water access and transportation.
- Grow accessible connections with Downtown and other nearby public destinations.
- Establish the Park as the “Hub” of Fairbanks.
- Improve visibility of and accessibility to the Park for motorized and non-motorized visitors.

Events:

The Park is the preferred place for social, educational, Centennial, and cultural events and gatherings of all sizes, of local and regional interest.

- Establish the park as the go-to location for events of all sizes and types.
- Feature the Park as the largest gathering space in Fairbanks.
- Continue Holiday themed events and popular annual programming.
- Increase occurrence of events that provide opportunities for local makers and entrepreneurs to do business.

Recreation:

The Park offers a balanced mix of activities and attractions year-round, providing opportunities for open play and specialty recreation.

- Provide a mix of activities and attractions for residents and tourists alike.
- Balance programmed events and open recreation.
- Continue to provide and improve recreation facilities, including the picnic areas, skating/bike loops, playground, mini golf, boat launch and landing.

Management:

The park is fiscally stable, thrives with community partnerships, and is a well-marketed attraction.

- Manage the park for improved fiscal sustainability.
- Increase park-generated revenues.
- Improve marketing of the park for residents and visitors.
- Continue and foster lasting partnerships with tourism, education, and other supporting organizations.

MASTER PLAN PHASING MAP

EXISTING CONDITIONS

PRIMARY FEATURES + AREAS



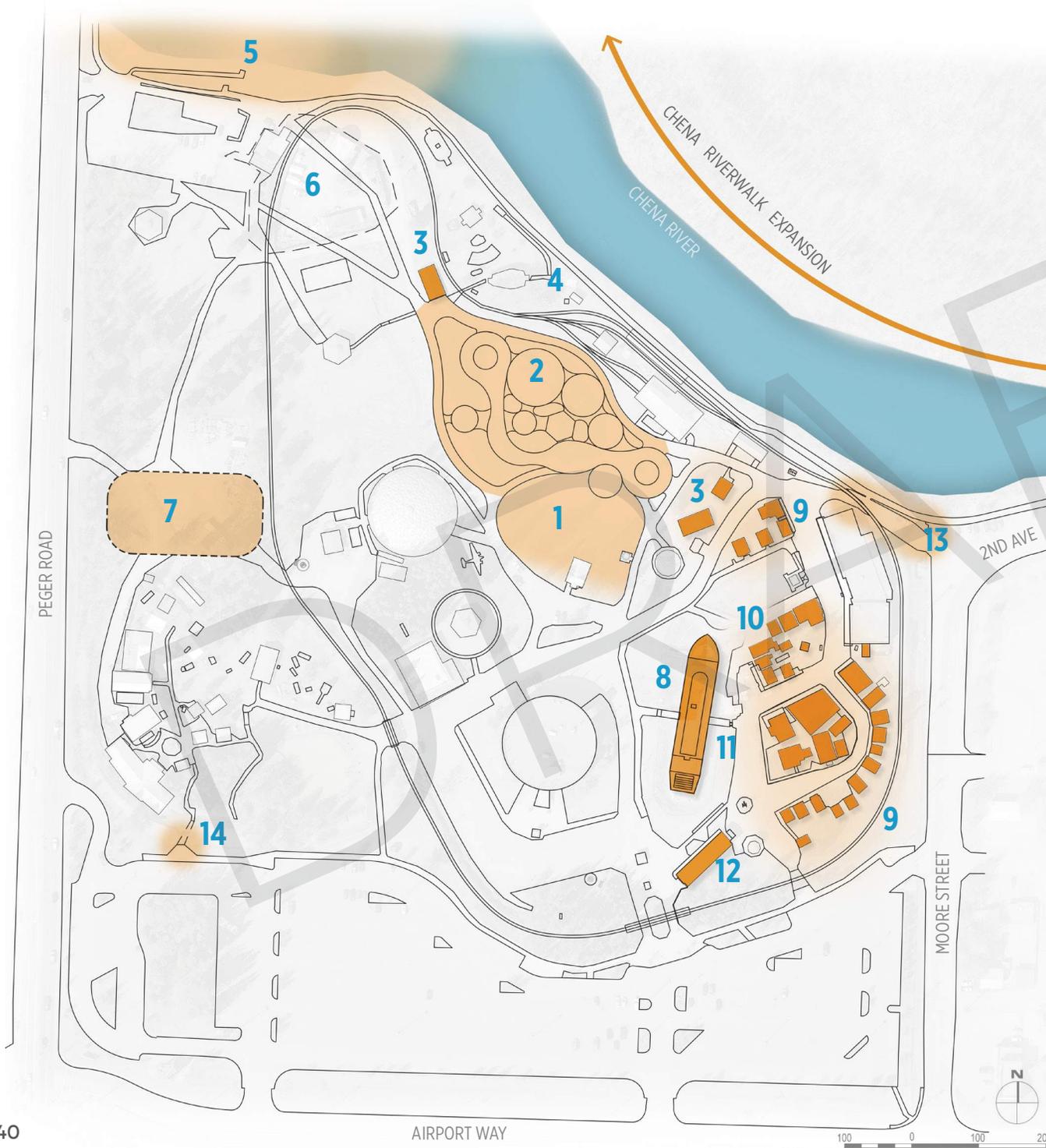
- A. Mini Golf
- B. Playground
- C. Dock
- D. Railroad Track
- E. Centennial Center
- F. SS Nenana
- G. Harding Car
- H. Salmon Bake
- i. Maintenance Areas
- J. Entries

Existing: Today

Verb, Verb Verb!

Summary In Progress

DRAFT



ALASKA REGIONS PLAYGROUND

1. Mini Golf (Recently Installed)
2. Alaska Regions Playground*
3. Year Round **Restroom** *
including Utility Improvements
4. **Cabin** Removal

CHENA HERITAGE PARK

5. Preparation for Dock Improvements
6. Maintenance Yard Removal
7. Maintenance Yard New Location

GOLD RUSH TOWN

8. **SS Nenana** Stabilization *
9. Gold Rush Town **Cabins**
Renovation + Care (Annually)*
10. Utility Improvements
11. **Cabin** Removal
12. **Harding Car** Restoration
13. Entry + Access Point ADA
Improvements

MINING VALLEY

14. Entry + Access Point ADA
Improvements

*Funded Project In Progress

Phase 1: Years 0-5

STABILIZE, PRESERVE + PREPARE

Reinforce buildings of importance, build up park identities in a number of areas, upgrade infrastructure to help set the stage for future phase improvements. This phase also focuses on improving accessibility of existing paths and structures for elders and people with disabilities.

Gold Rush Town

- Stabilize, repair and replace critical structures annually, address deficiencies and improve accessibility/services.
- Improve utilities to expand the pool of potential tenants (water/sewer etc as necessary).
- Stabilize the SS Nenana.
- Remove compromised cabin adjacent to the SS Nenana, and relocate vendors into utility-improved adjacent structures.
- Make repairs to the Harding Rail Car.

Mining Valley

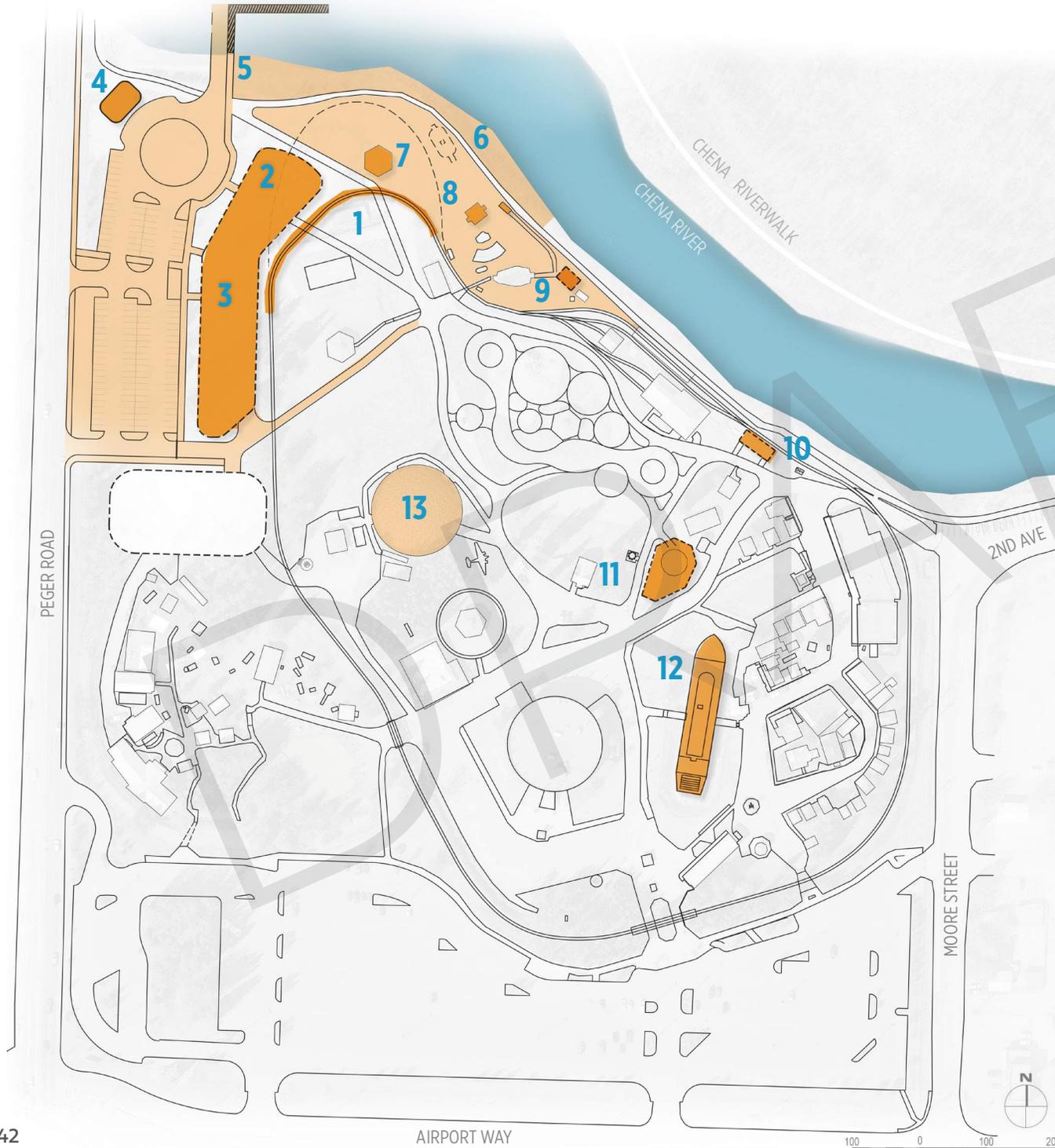
- Address entrance ADA issues.
- Improve wayfinding to better connect to the park at large
- New maintenance yard and access to the north along Peger road.

Alaska Regions Playground

- Mini Golf installed to bring additional revenue.
- Build out year-round conditioned bathrooms to support winter activities.
 - North Bathrooms require utility improvements. This investment will help reduce phase 2 project costs in the Chena Heritage Park.
- New Inclusive playground, highlighting Alaskan ecology, culture and economy, while providing exciting play for all ages. Area to be programmed year-round.
- Ice loop added in winter for community use.
- Remove compromised cabin adjacent to the multi-use path.

Chena Heritage Park (Northwest)

- Dredge Boat launch area and undertake preliminary site improvements in preparation for Phase 2 work.
- Moves maintenance areas and park office to a more central, and functionally preferred, location. The new location allows park staff to access the office and the maintenance area without driving through pedestrian circulation areas.



CHENA HERITAGE PARK

1. Railroad Track Realignment
2. **Food Vendor**
3. **Multi-Purpose Center**
 - Gallery Space
 - Event Center
 - Preschool
 - Park Office
4. **Recreation Rentals**
5. Boat Ramp
6. **Underground Kashim** Removal
7. **Pavilion** + Riverfront Lawn
8. **Kashim** Rebuild

TANANA VALLEY RAILROAD

9. River Viewing Deck + New Park Entry
10. Covered Viewing Deck

GOLD RUSH TOWN

11. Enclose **Carousel**
12. **SS Nenana** Full Restoration

COMMUNITY GATHERING

13. **Gold Dome** Repurposing
For Recreational Use

Phase 2: Years 6-10

REINFORCE, DEVELOP + GROW

Phase 2 reinforces park identity and use in multiple areas. Work during this period develops additional spaces and structures for visitors and community organizations to utilize and enjoy. It consolidates much of the park's administrative and maintenance traffic to one location, outside of the pedestrian and non-motorized areas. These efforts help make the park safer and more inclusive of our communities diverse needs.

Chena Heritage Park

Reconfiguration in the North West corner of the park allows new development of priority park programs. Additions include:

- Expanded riverfront connections and amenities.
 - A greatly improved boat launch area and dock, allow for additional traffic into and out of this location, encouraging waterborne visitors to utilize the park as a pit stop or destination during water recreational activities.
- A developed major entry into the north end of the park.
- Minor realignment of rail line to eliminate vehicle conflicts and provide larger lawn + pavilion adjacent river.
- Reinvigorate the heritage story at the park and amplify the celebration of Native cultures through a blend of live demonstrations, and fixed exhibit/displays.
- A water-facing food vendor.
- Improved and expanded parking closer to the water and playground areas.
- A new (20k SF) multi-purpose Center. This facility is intended to provide gallery and event space and may work directly with an established Alaska Native organization as an anchor tenant and provider of on-site demonstrations. This facility is also intended to remove some of the pressure on the aging Centennial Center, and to provide new ADA Accessible rentable space.

Gold Rush Town

- Full restoration of the SS Nenana, fully reopen all levels to the public and providing upper-level viewing decks/amenities.

Alaska Regions Playground

- Enclosure of the carousel to include ice skate rentals and hot drinks in the winter season.

Tanana Valley Railroad

- River-facing viewing platforms.
- New park entry along multi-use path between the Tanana Valley Rail yard and the Chena Heritage Park, near the Folk School shop space.



COMMUNITY GATHERING

- 1. **Centennial Lawn**
New large central gathering space
- 2. **Stage + Performance Bandshell**
 - Full Utilities
 - Stage Supprt Spaces
 - Restrooms
- 3. **Main Entry Improvements**
Revamp Visitor Booth + New Wayfinding

RIVERFRONT REC. DISTRICT

- 4. **Chena River Overlooks**
Seating, Intrepretive Signage and Artifacts Related to Heritage, Environment + Ecology
- 5. **Growden Park Complex Expansion**
Meaningful Pedestrian Connection and Future Recreation Areas

Phase 3: Years 10+

DIVERSIFY + EXPAND

Phase 3 meets long term goals for expanding the overall capacity and connectivity of the park. With much of the Centennial Center's use now located in the Heritage Park Facilities, the structure can be sunset in favor of creating a large community scale gathering lawn. This accommodates major events and performances, as well as year round open space for enjoyment. This effort also moves a major portion of public vehicle circulation out of the parks boundaries. Additionally the expanded relationship with Growden Recreation complex, rounds out the offerings into a recreational district

Community Gathering

At the arrival of its end-of-life, the Centennial Center removal completes the transformation at the south end of the park .

- Disassemble the Centennial Center, salvaging exterior masks for relocation around the park.
- Create a large open green for concerts and events.
 - Public vehicular circulation is now largely removed from the internal park boundaries.
- Build a bandshell pavilion along the south edge, against the rail tracks.
- Construct additional bathrooms to support this new large green space.

District Expansion

- Connection to the adjacent Growden Recreation Complex, strengthens the park system and provides a large diverse and active public district.
- Connection improvements between the park and larger recreational resources should be undertaken.
- Chena River Overlooks provide improved viewpoints, seating and educational opportunities. This could include interpretive signage/artifacts related to the area Heritage,

Gold Rush Town

- Continue to stabilize, repair and replace critical structures annually, address deficiencies and improve accessibility/ services.
- With the reconfigured Moore street/2nd Ave and Growden park complex, a new entrance to the park should be added, or improvements made to the NE corner of the park.





Pioneer Park Masterplan + Beyond

IDEA + ACTION

[summary paragraph speaking to the impact at a community level]

concept 1

summary

- bullet
- bullet



IMPLEMENTATION

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DRAFT

Goals for Market Development

Increasing Resident Usage

One of the park's goals is to increase the annual average number of visits by residents. While many local park users do not spend money every time they are in the park, an overall increase in the number of visits by residents should increase vendor and park revenues incrementally.

To take advantage of anticipated population growth, the park will need to provide an attractive, clean, and safe space with activities of interest for individuals and families. Concentrated marketing efforts will also be key in maintaining and increasing resident use of the park.

Increasing Visitation

Industry expectations for Alaska's post-pandemic visitor traffic are for a return to pre-COVID levels in the near term, followed by a continuation of the previous growth that had characterized the state's visitor industry since the late 2010s. For Fairbanks specifically, the destination stands to benefit from anticipated cruise volume growth, as well as resumed growth in winter travel driven by interest in Aurora viewing. Summer air and highway markets are more difficult to predict in the post-pandemic environment. Northern highway traffic took a dip in 2019, but the pandemic-driven trend of RV and other long-haul road trip travel may reinvigorate this market. The summer air market (not including cruise) had not been growing as fast as either the winter or cruise markets, so may be slower to recover.

Increasing visitor traffic to Pioneer Park will require investment in marketing, development of relationships with tour operators, and improved quality to compete with other attractions in Fairbanks.

Increasing Marketing Budget and Effort

An increase in the park's marketing budget appears warranted and should focus on attracting users that have the highest potential to directly generate revenue rather than to simply increase park visitation overall. Hiring a part-time marketing person to prepare a focused marketing plan would be beneficial but may be difficult given current budget levels dedicated to staff payroll and benefits. If the park wishes to attract more large tour operators to the park, more active and frequent tour operator engagement is needed. Operators need clear messages about why they should bring visitors to the park.

Name Change

Dissatisfaction with the name of Pioneer Park was a common theme during the Public Involvement Process. The master plan team received many comments via social media, comment sections in articles about the new playground, and from participants in the public involvement events that the name "Pioneer Park" was not inclusive of all Alaska communities and needed to change.

Based on very clear feedback from the public in favor of a name change, the master plan team respectfully suggests that FNSB consider undergoing a name change process separate from this master plan that includes a citizen advisory committee.

Developing a Brand Identity

When developing a brand identity, it is critical the brand's promise resonate with all potential user groups. The park's current mix of historical and cultural attractions, retail and food service, arts, and recreation makes it challenging to characterize with a common brand identity that appeals to all user groups.

The issue of whether to again change the name of the park is for park management and the Borough to consider. Any name change needs to be considered in tandem with development of a solid brand. As part of a branding process, the park will need to consider facility entrance and wayfinding signage, logo, and other visual aspects that could benefit from a common brand message. Some potential names discussed by the advisory committee were "Heritage Park" and "North Star Park."

Increasing Revenue

As part of this master plan, McKinley Research Group explored multiple options for increasing revenue for Pioneer Park in order to alleviate the low cost recovery conditions. A more detailed explanation of the opportunities for increased revenue is included in Appendix B. The following is a summary of their findings.

Scenarios to Increase Revenue from Existing Sources

An across-the-board increase of 2%, 5%, or 10% for all park leases and fees would generate additional revenue of \$4,740, \$11,850, and \$23,700, which increases cost recovery by 0.3%, 0.9%, and 1.7%, respectively. These fee increases would have a modest impact on cabin leases, train tickets, and RV space rentals.

Potential New Sources of Revenue

When thinking about potential new development of park attractions, activities, or businesses, the primary goal from a business assessment perspective is the potential to generate net revenue to increase the park's cost recovery. Secondary considerations include developments that are attractive to visitors, residents, and youth market segments; the level of capital investment required; private versus public operation of the development; and the annual budget needed to support the development long-term (i.e., labor, maintenance, supplies, etc.). In addition to increasing marketing efforts, other avenues to increase visitation includes developing products that appeal to those that are not current park users, as well as encourage current users to visit the park more frequently.

Ideas for new developments were generated by park staff, public stakeholders, executive interviewees, the study team, and others throughout the Master Plan process. The following is a list of potential new sources of revenue (full descriptions can be found in Appendix B):

- Mini Golf
- Alaska Native Cultural Programming
 - World Eskimo-Indian Olympics (WEIO) Demonstrations
 - Other Cultural Demonstrations
- Gold Panning Demonstrations
- Dog Mushing Demonstrations
- Rental of Rail Riders
- Ice Skate Rentals
- Bandshell with outdoor seating

Multipurpose Facilities

There are a variety of potential multi-use facilities that could be developed which could include some combination of park or other business offices, retail, gallery, event space, pre-school, and food service. The main purpose of a multi-use facility would be to generate revenue for the park while increasing attractions and activities for park users. Pairing a public aspect of the park, such as a mining museum or display, with a private operation such as a restaurant would draw more visitors to the operation benefitting both the park and the operator. The northwest corner of the park has potential for this type of operation. This location close to the river may be of interest to current vendors such as Canoe Alaska or others with an interest in being co-located near the waterfront.

Development of a facility with a high-end food vendor as an anchor tenant would be attractive to both residents and locals. This model could be a typical sit-down style restaurant or perhaps a brew pub. A food service business looking at the feasibility of a new operation would need to consider the overall Fairbanks food service market and develop a concept that would be attractive to Fairbanks's residents as well as evaluate the seasonal nature of the park and the potential for year-round operations (and profitability).

The park should engage in a discovery process to identify other potential multipurpose tenants and their space requirements. The size and design of an event space should be considered in context with other park and community event spaces to determine potential demand, optimal size, and amenities.

Due to the significant level of capital investment needed for development of a multipurpose facility, a comprehensive feasibility study would be needed to understand construction costs, potential revenue, expenses, and net profit. How the park and a private operator may share in the risks and potential rewards from any of these options would need to be negotiated. The Park could generate revenue from lease fees and/or a percent of gross revenues. If the Park office were moved, there may be potential to lease the current space to a vendor to generate additional revenue. If the park or the FNSB contribute capital to the project, there would need to be a clear understanding of the expectations for capital payback as well as a return on investment that increases the parks level of cost recovery.

See Table 20 - Summary Assessment of New Development Potential in Appendix B for more information about the viability of the different development options.

Plan Approval and Adoption

In-Process

DRAFT

Cost Estimate

In-Process

DRAFT

DRAFT



BETTISWORTH
NORTH

AUGUST 12, 2021 STATUS + NEXT STEPS:

NEXT STEPS

FairbanksPioneerParkPlan.com

Draft Master Plan + Resident Survey on the website

Resident Survey + Park User Survey (live at the park) Closes **August 16, 2021**

Draft Master Plan Public Comment Period Closes **September 1, 2021**

Final Master Plan Completed **September 30, 2021**

Assembly Review + Approval **4th Quarter 2021**



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