

Memo to: Nick Farline, Director

CC: Teresa Penbrooke, GP Principle in Charge
Dave Peterson, GP GIS Manager
Keri Konold, GP Project Consultant
Jake Jorgenson, RRC Senior Research Analyst

From: Teresa Jackson, Project Manager, GreenPlay, LLC

Date: November 8, 2019

Subject: City of Valdez, Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Focus groups, stakeholder interviews and a public forum were conducted during November 4-6, 2019. These meetings were held throughout the City. The goal of these sessions was to gather information that would guide the development of the parks and recreation needs assessment community survey. Participant contacts included:

- Users/community members (84) (6 under the age of 16)
- Parks and Recreation Commission Members (9)
- Department Staff (8)
- City Manager (2)
- City Council (4)

A summary of responses follows. Responses are not prioritized. It should be noted that some participants chose not to respond during the sessions.

How long have you been a resident of the City of Valdez?

- (23) <5 years
- (18) 5-9 years
- (25) 10 – 19 years
- (25) 20+ years
- (0) not a resident, but uses facilities and services, and participates in programs

What are the strengths of the City of Valdez Parks and Recreation System?

1. Availability and variety of facilities**
2. Youth programs and facilities are valuable because they have a safe place to visit*
3. Free access***
4. Winter trail maintenance
5. Span different ages with programs
6. Good awareness of wanting to make Valdez services better
7. Balance of indoor and outdoor programs and facilities
8. Staff does a good job getting people into programs/managing the programs
9. Strong winter trail system**
10. Facilities
11. Mineral Creek Trails
12. Hogs Back Mountain trails
13. High quality facilities for size of community*
14. All subdivisions have a park*
15. Variety of services provided**
16. Geographic setting of city

17. Easily accessible
18. Unbelievable skate skiing/groomed trails
19. Epic snow
20. Investment in winter maintenance and grooming
21. Surrounded by public use land
22. Well-maintained facilities and restrooms clean and user-friendly
23. Large funding from community organizations
24. People in the community
25. Flexibility of parks staff, easy to work with
26. PR works well with schools (pools, rock climbing wall)
27. Work well with volunteers (SWAN)
28. Low-cost/free programs*
29. Variety of activities for abilities, ages (i.e., movement)
30. Quality employees
31. Not overcrowded
32. Strong support from local government
33. "Do you own butter" at movie theater
34. High-end facilities for the size of the town
35. Plenty of natural resources**
36. Marcy
37. Valdez is attractive to visitors
38. Indoor programs
39. Transition between seasons is strong
40. Trail system and year-round use*
41. XC system*
42. Department is focused on community needs and adjust
43. Proactive rather than reactive
44. Facilities for use by transient population
45. Responsive to requests by residents
46. Broad range of activities for families*
47. Good use of recreation center

What are the weaknesses that need to be addressed through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

1. Shoup Trail maintenance out to Gold Creek
2. High school trail needed (behind high school)
3. Visitors don't know what Valdez system has to offer (could work with visitor's bureau)
4. Community engagement
5. Lack of consistent standards amongst all local organizations/providers
6. Youth program sign-up has to be done in-person
7. Public restrooms at trailheads aren't always accessible
8. Facilities that are accessible during the daytime (need a daytime gym)
9. Developing the trail potential in the area (i.e., Hogs Back)
10. Maintaining existing trails (i.e., Shoup)
11. Planning (and "what's happening") calendars from community orgs are not coordinated (communication for scheduling the shared facilities)**
12. Majority of visitors are seniors and there is no access to sights beyond Valdez
13. Lights on racquetball court need fixing
14. Summer trail maintenance could be better
15. Need restroom & trash at Glacier Lake* and Robe Lake (formalize/manage these areas)**

16. Amenities (restrooms, trash cans) aren't available in-line with season
17. No community liaison between different groups in the city and coordinator to pull things together (no city liaison to work with outside groups)*
18. Certain facilities are weather vulnerable at (i.e, Ruth Pond and Salmonberry Ski Hill)
19. Losing the ice rink
20. No covered playgrounds
21. Lack of indoor facilities for when the weather is inclement
22. No pump track
23. No separate gym
24. No facilities for mountain biking; no skills park (with fat tire biking becoming more popular)
25. Underutilization
26. Need more/better signage for visitors to explain what's motorized/what's non-motorized
27. Need more community races (i.e., runs, biking)
28. Signage at Glacier Lake for danger of ice
29. Sledding hill has trees at base of Mineral Creek are a hazard
30. No winter camping
31. No bike path from Dayville to water falls/Keystone Canyon; on-road access
32. No tent camping outside of parking lots
33. Hiking trails (south side) at Robe Lake
34. Boardwalk to support shore excursions
35. Bridal Veil Falls improvements
36. Lack of advertisement of ski opportunities
37. Marketing of programs and facilities
38. Environmental-outdoor education opportunities (expansion of)
39. City is basically caring for unfunded state parks
40. More artificial outdoor opportunities for climbing activities
41. Opportunity to partner with non-city organizations (for communications, standards, programming, eco development, etc.)****
42. Unclear programming roles between organizations (lots of asking the city for help)*
43. Lack of gym space (competing uses of facilities and rec center is small)**
44. Lack of ice rink
45. Staff turnover
46. All restrooms were closed during recent 5K race
47. Keeping budget constraints in mind
48. Succession planning for Marcy's position
49. Lack of adequate staffing on maintenance side; balance of staff between maintenance and programs staff
50. Dog waste in parks
51. Community awareness of what's state land and what's city land
52. Communication about programs and other general matters like cancellations*
53. Lack of staffing can cause cancellation of programs
54. Have to be well-bodied to use most amenities (lack of services for people needing adaptive programming)
55. Accessibility
56. Managing the archery range is used as a dump site; have a plan for managing this parcel
57. Can't reserve the shooting range
58. Lack of coordination between those who are providing programs

What additional recreational activities do you feel should be offered by the City of Valdez that are currently not available?

1. Outdoor climbing facility – artificial walls
2. Shoup Bay trails maintenance
3. Pump track/trails
4. 5K races (for all ages)
5. Open swim* (at night)
6. Special events
7. Real ski lift at Salmonberry Ski Hill*
8. Long distance hiking and backpacking
9. Ice skating*
10. Hockey*
11. Soccer
12. Long distance kayaking
13. Bowling
14. Jet skiing
15. Indoor walking track/course
16. Disc golf*
17. Non-rigorous exercise classes
18. Social programs
19. Challenge course
20. Bocci ball
21. Biathalon
22. Sailing
23. Outdoor skills for all ages* (i.e., winter camping, avalanche awareness)
24. X-terra challenge races
25. Intergenerational programs
26. White water introductory classes
27. Roll clinic for kayaking at a pool
28. Snowshoe races
29. A framework for organizing these things
30. Visual/cultural arts programs
31. Movie nights for younger adults (beer and food)
32. Intro clinics and classes
33. Mountain huts
34. Interpretive signage
35. More accessible nature walks (ex: boardwalks which need to consider high tides, Seldovia)
36. Moorings to expand access
37. Volunteer program
38. Robe River Park and Corbin Creek playground is due for replacement
39. Incentives to complete physical activities (i.e. 300-mile club); formerly in partnership with SWAN

What new or improved recreational amenities would you like to see available?

1. Solar bike trail (ex: Norway)
2. Disc golf course
3. Indoor recreation center with courts, gym, pool, walking track, lots of programs***
4. Connect trails (i.e., terminal to Mineral Creek)
5. Use the structure at Kelsey Dock better
6. Accessibility for seniors
7. A more appropriate swim platform (besides Kelsey Dock)
8. Walking track
9. Lighted trails
10. Dike Trails
11. Bird Sanctuary Trails
12. Ice rink (indoor/outdoor, covered, sheet of ice)***
13. Overnight parking facilities at kayaking ramp/launch
14. Trail access
15. Covered tennis courts
16. Real ski lift
17. Valdez moto-x track maintenance
18. Mineral Creek Trail amenities such as a covered area for resting and hanging things, restroom, warming hut
19. More motorized trails as well as signage at these
20. Signage for motorized/non-motorized and trail etiquette
21. Looped trails for motorized trails
22. Utilize Mineral Creek Trail in summer for mtn biking
23. More creative playgrounds
24. No gravel playground pads
25. Upgrade shooting range
26. Add shooting sports facilities
27. Bike path from Alpine Woods extended to Keystone Canyon***
28. Saltwater pool
29. Improve single track trails (make more accessible for mtn biking)
30. Fat tire bike stands
31. Signage at trailheads with pertinent information
32. Shoup Bay Trail** needs rebuilding (with heavy equipment)*; 1st section is getting degraded; maintain 1st section as ADA accessible; 2nd section as single-track
33. Trails need to be big enough to be machine maintained
34. Use snow lots as community gardens in summer
35. Pickleball courts
36. Indoor gym** (that's not a part of the school system)
37. Kayak racks
38. Fencing around the existing community garden
39. Covered picnic areas
40. Bigger dog park/another dog park
41. Ski trails at Mineral Creek
42. Indoor playground
43. Waterfront walk with interpretive signage
44. Sea Otter RV park (now has garbage)
45. Ski resort
46. Better use park behind fire station for year-round activation (South Barney Meyring Park)

47. More trails
48. Access to CVEA hydro power project area (Allison project)
49. Trail to "Area 51" (west of Solomon Lake)
50. Year-round restrooms at facilities
51. More garbage receptacles along trails/trailheads
52. Kids' fishing access/platform at Ruth Pond
53. Mountain biking trails (single track and more level trails)***
54. Tent camping sites (at Sea Otter)
55. Indoor bouldering/climbing**
56. Increased designated outdoor climbing**
57. Motorized track nearer to town
58. Access, and trail to and at, Sea Otter
59. Alcohol permits at facilities
60. Improvements at Robe Lake* (water flow, restrooms)
61. Pump track (activities for young/beginning bikers)
62. Outdoor fitness trail at the Waterfront

Are there any portions of the City of Valdez that are underserved?

1. Elderly/seniors**
2. Homebound
3. Middle school summer programs*
4. People without vehicles*
5. Programs for 20-30-year-olds*** (ex: Coast Guard)
6. Residents beyond Dayville
7. People who live farther outside of town
8. Bike trail from Dayville to Keystone (for people who live in this area)
9. Pre-schoolers
10. 0-3-year-olds* and 0-5 year-olds
11. Dogs
12. People who work
13. Alpine Woods neighborhood
14. People experiencing disabilities
15. Younger Coast Guard members
16. Non-outdoor recreational enthusiasts
17. Neighborhoods by airport
18. Beginning skiers
19. Single parents with children
20. People experiencing depression

How do you believe the needs and initiatives identified in the Master Plan should be financially supported?

Focus on identifying which should be run by PR and which should not (partnership opportunities)

1. Contractors
2. Setting fees to off-set costs*****
3. Use existing funds
4. Resident/non-resident fees*
5. Scholarship program
6. Fundraising
7. Have a pass to facilities for residents (such as the pool or the ski hill) *
8. Stop planning and act

9. Provide \$1M additional general fund/year for operations so city can invest in the future of the city
10. Seasonal sales tax that at least a portion of which goes to P&R*****
11. Tax*
12. Need to consider O&M costs so that when oil runs out these things can be paid for
13. Build more sustainable facilities
14. Work to bring people to Valdez
15. Changes to tax structure
16. Bolster recreation services now so that when oil-based funding is no longer as reliable
17. Long-term plan to move to a scaled fee system
18. Work strategically alongside public to determine long-term projects
19. Grants** (ex: USFS)
20. City-wide volunteer corps/volunteers* (ex: trail maintenance)
21. Fees waived for volunteers after so many hours met
22. Community service of high school students (requirement to graduate)
23. Economic development funds
24. Should be subsidized but not free
25. Creative partnerships
26. Don't duplicate services
27. Redirect revenues back into the program/facility

Who are the key partners and stakeholders in the community with regards to assisting with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

1. Create a stakeholder list of potential partners
2. Coast Guard***
3. Prince William Sound College – Health and Fitness Center*
4. Snow machine Club**
5. Valdez Adventure Alliance**
6. Valdez Native Tribe Association*
7. Alyeska***
8. Providence Medical Center**
9. Avalanche Center
10. Fish processing company seasonal employees
11. Schools***
12. Public radio station
13. State politicians
14. Department of Transportation – Mineral Creek
15. Bureau of Land Management
16. High School A/V students
17. State of Alaska
18. Adjacent landowners
19. Native corps*
20. Recreation businesses
21. City Council
22. Exxon Valdez Oil Spill
23. Museum*
24. Book clubs
25. Utility companies
26. Edison Schouest
27. Copper Valley Community Foundation

28. Eagles
29. Elks
30. Free Masons
31. SWAN (Sound Wellness Alliance Network) **
32. United Way*
33. Other City Departments
34. Police Department
35. Pioneers of Alaska
36. Corporate businesses
37. Hotels
38. VCVB Arts Council
39. Community service organizations
40. University of Alaska Anchorage
41. Cruise ship operators
42. VCVB could connect with cruise ship operators
43. Little League

What are the key issues and values that the City needs to consider moving forward?

1. Healthy lifestyles
2. Community engagement
3. Education
4. Sustainability (take care of what we own)
5. Fiscal sustainability***
6. Human sustainability*
7. Cost of ongoing maintenance costs
8. Healthy lifestyle choices
9. Community investment in citizens
10. Provide stairway to achieving standards
11. Compromising with one another
12. Long-term budgetary impacts
13. Access (financial and physical) to what Valdez has to offer*
14. Stewardship of natural resources
15. Integration of all residents
16. Attract new residents and businesses
17. Maintain a broad focus on recreation opportunities
18. Take advantage of existing facilities
19. Opportunities for all people regardless of age and abilities
20. Staffing adequately*
21. Not relying on volunteers
22. Inclusion
23. Climate change (considering it as an impact to trends)
24. User groups and numbers (quantifying need)
25. City Council can vet decisions better by better understanding the impacts of decisions
26. Diversification of the economy
27. Supporting working together
28. Accessibility and equity
29. Environmental impacts
30. Remembering that not everything should be centered downtown
31. Feature and value parks and recreation services in economic vitality*

Other comments/suggestions/feedback?

1. Performance measurement system for programs and facilities (i.e., monitoring use)
2. Make it easy to make payments for services
3. Need a community calendar for city, businesses, and anyone else to post events, programs, etc.
4. City can use volunteers better; Need to train volunteers
5. Nice, safe community and quality of life isn't found many places in AK; PR plays a role in making this happen and helps keep people here
6. The City should consider PR more as an equal partner with other City Departments
7. Incentivize play and connectedness
8. State is retracting management of state lands
9. Map out the providers and find ways to partner
10. Need a community calendar (possibly with radio)
11. When working with the city to get things done barriers exist (i.e., liability concerns, planning for events)
12. Coast Guard makes up about 10% of population; 125 active duty plus families; parks help improve morale)
13. Tent camping at Gold Fields Sports Complex
14. Alyeska settlement is going to be renegotiated
15. Cost recovery exercise
16. University of Alaska Anchorage is a nearby property owner