



TO: Dan Bleidorn, Lands & Resources Manager
FROM: George Schaaf, Parks & Recreation Director
DATE: September 20, 2022
RE: Park Infrastructure - Pederson Hill

The Assembly is currently considering a proposal to transfer CBJ property at Pederson Hill to Tlingit & Haida Regional Housing Authority for future development. At the request of the Mayor, you requested additional information about parks and recreation infrastructure planned for this area. The Parks & Recreation Department recommends that Lot 5 be developed as a Mini Park to meet the service standards adopted by the CBJ Parks & Recreation Master Plan (2019-29). The Department recommends that CBJ not retain Lot 7.

Background

The plat for Pederson Hill Subdivision Phase II reserves two lots for recreation and conservation purposes: Lot 7 is identified as a "Conservation Lot" and Lot 5 is identified as a "Park Lot." Staff from Parks & Recreation and Lands & Resources conducted a site visit in May 2019. Lot 7 is not suitable for development due to drainage, but has low conservation value due to its proximity to other parcels. Lot 5 is centrally located and well-suited for a development as a small Mini Park, including a playground.

Service Levels & Community Need

The CBJ Parks & Recreation Master Plan is adopted by the Assembly and establishes service standards for various types of Recreation Service Parks (RSPs). Juneau's smallest RSPs are "Mini Parks," which are "intended to provide close-to-home opportunities to young children, senior citizens, or those who are unable to travel farther for open space and unstructured activities" (p.81). The service area for a Mini Park is 5-10 minutes travel time, and/or a population of 2,000 – 4,000. Development criteria for Mini Parks include playgrounds, open play areas, picnic tables, benches, and small community gardens. The site should be centrally located to the area it serves, be within walking distance of the residents it serves, and not require crossing busy streets. According to the Parks & Recreation Master Plan, new parks should be acquired and developed when it is in the public interest, including to accommodate new development. The closest existing RSP with a playground is Riverside Rotary Park, which is a 40-minute walk from Pederson Hill. While school playgrounds are not always available, they do provide some access to playgrounds. The closest school playgrounds are Riverbend Elementary School (27 minutes) and Auke Bay Elementary School (43 minutes).

Similarly, the Juneau Comprehensive Plan is adopted by the Assembly and establishes a policy that supports the acquisition and development of parks and recreation facilities:

Policy 9.1

To provide quality dispersed outdoor recreation opportunities and to acquire and develop sufficient local parks and recreational facilities in locations convenient to all areas of the CBJ. Places given priority for new facilities include rapidly developing areas and currently developed areas that lack adequate parks and recreation facilities.

Implementing Action 9.1 - IA1

CDD staff should work with P&RD staff and interested parties to develop thresholds and standards in the Land Use Code for construction of playgrounds and trail linkages by developers to serve their proposed new subdivisions and residential developments, taking into account existing facilities within the area, proposed development population play and recreation needs, and size of the proposed development. CDD and the P&RD should work with developers to address neighborhood park needs. P&RD and CDD staff should work cooperatively to monitor commitments by developers of new residential developments that may fulfill a condition of the development. These may include construction of new trails and playgrounds. CDD should work with P&RD to monitor existing community improvements in permitted residential developments.

Implementing Action 9.1 - IA11

Investigate the location and number of mini parks needed in the community and construct new mini parks as needed.

The Master Plan provides no service standards for Conservation Areas, which are not managed by CBJ except for resource damage and other problems. While Conservation Areas (e.g. “Greenbelts”) can help protect sensitive habitats or mitigate natural hazards, they can be problematic when located adjacent to residential developments due to dumping, hazard trees, and other issues that must be mitigated by CBJ.

Capital & Operating Costs

Planning and designing new park facilities requires an extensive public process; however, it is possible to estimate construction costs by comparing similar Mini Parks in Juneau. Examples of Mini Parks include West Juneau Rotary Park, Mendenhaven Park, and Bonnie Brae Park. These parks offer play structures, picnic tables, and park benches. Newly constructed parks may include lighting and must comply with modern standards for accessibility and safety, including fall-protection surfaces. A small playground with typical park furnishings would cost approximately \$500,000, including design, contingency, construction administration services and CBJ overhead. Maintenance costs for staff time and materials for garbage removal, litter cleanup, inspections and repairs is estimated at \$20,000 per year. The addition of one small park to the Juneau Park system may not warrant adding additional staff for maintenance at this time, however, multiple additions to the Park system may require additional maintenance staff.

Recommendation

Staff recommend that Lot 5 be developed as a Mini Park to meet service standards adopted in the CBJ Parks & Recreation Master Plan (2019-29). Because Lot 7 has little conservation value and is likely to require costly maintenance in the future, it should not be retained by CBJ.

Note: Like roads, sidewalks, and streetlights, parks are public infrastructure. Staff strongly recommend that Lot 5 be developed by CBJ, including design and construction so it meets current standards and to reduce future maintenance costs. Private developers should not build public playgrounds because CBJ has no control over the design, quality, or installation of playground equipment and other items. There are many playgrounds in Juneau that were built by private developers and either abandoned or transferred to CBJ. Those that were transferred to CBJ (Steelhead Street Playground and Sit'wan Park) are in very poor condition and must be replaced using public funds.