



Fairbanks North Star Borough

COMMUNITY PLANNING

planning@fnsb.gov
Main: (907) 459-1260
Fax: (907) 459-1255

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chena Riverfront Commission

FROM: Kellen D. Spillman
Community Planning Acting Director

DATE: September 22, 2021

SUBJECT: **Pioneer Park Master Plan Consistency with the Chena Riverfront Plan**

The FNSB Department of Parks and Recreation has requested the Chena Riverfront Commission's review and recommendation regarding the Pioneer Park Master Plan (PPMP). Per FNSBC 4.32.090(G), the commission shall: *(i)n its discretion, consistent with the goals and objectives of the riverfront plan, make recommendations to the mayor, assembly, or the city of Fairbanks regarding uses and development of land on the Chena riverfront.*

Pioneer Park is located on the south bank of the Chena River. Per FNSBC 4.32.090, the FNSB Administration has requested that the Chena Riverfront Commission review and make a recommendation on the consistency of the draft Pioneer Park Master Plan with the Chena Riverfront Plan.

Overview of the Pioneer Park Master Plan

The Pioneer Park Master Plan (PPMP) includes a three-phase development plan spanning the next ten years and beyond.

This plan divides the park into six themed functional zones: Alaska Regions Playground, Tanana Valley Railroad, Chena Heritage Park, Community Gathering, Gold Rush Town, and Mining Valley. The Chena Heritage Park includes the boat launch and dock areas and includes the river connection, community focus, native & cultural recreation and environmental education in its identity. Figure 1 displays the proposed breakdown of the six functional zones.



MASTER PLAN ZONES

STRENGTHENING USE + IDENTITY
THROUGHOUT THE PARK

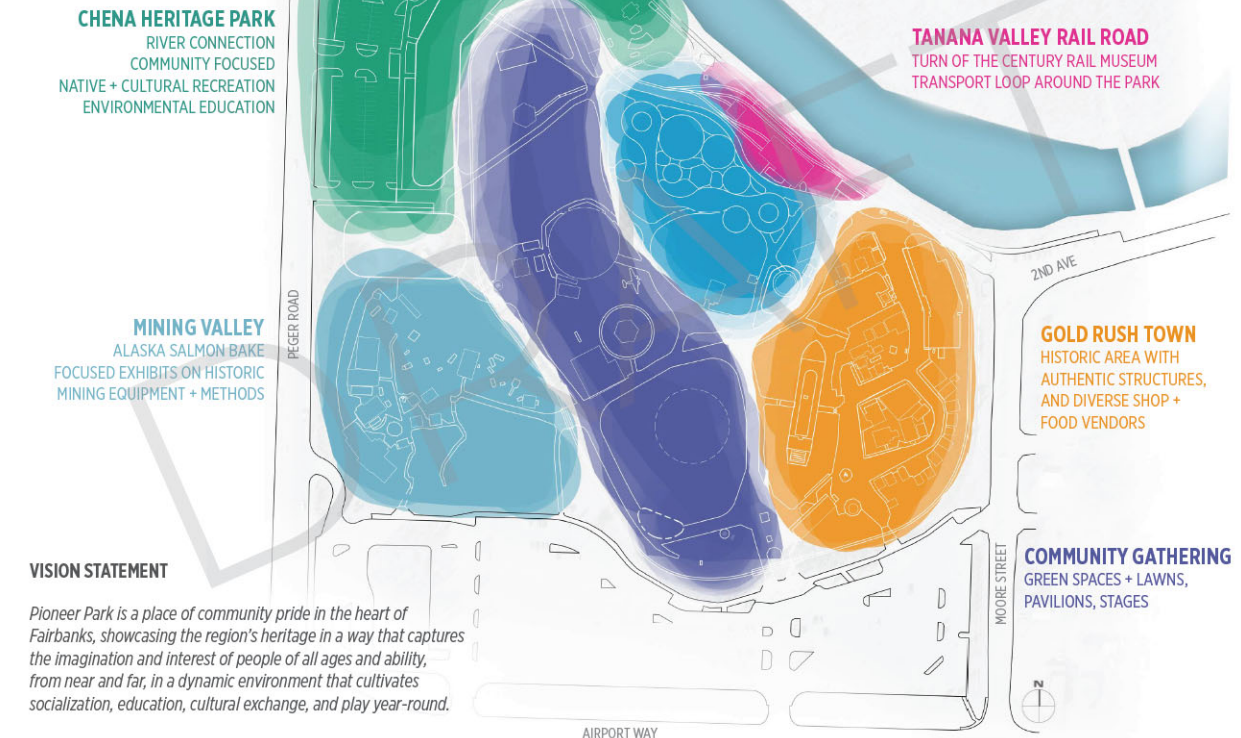


Figure 1: Proposed Functional Zones

The Chena Heritage Park in the northwest corner of the park includes most of the existing riverfront amenities, such as the boat launch, dock, boat equipment rentals and parking area. The PPMP includes a three-phased approach to facilities maintenance and improvements:

- Phase I (years 0-5) focuses on stabilizing existing facilities and preparing for later projects. This phase includes dredging the boat launch area and conducting site prep.
- Phase II (years 6-10) includes a reconfiguration of the Chena Heritage Park area, creating a major entrance to the park, developing a larger lawn and pavilion and improved parking near the river, and establishing a food vendor in this area. Phase II also adds “river-facing viewing platforms” in the Tanana Valley Railroad area of the park.
- Phase III (years 10 and beyond) identifies the need to improve connections “between the park and larger recreational resources” and adds seating and interpretive signage at overlooks at multiple locations along the river.

Consistency with the Chena Riverfront Plan

The CRFP and PPMP both recognize the importance of the Chena River as part of our community's heritage, transportation and recreation network. Access to the river and the importance of the river to the community is emphasized throughout both plans.

CRFP Goal II, Policy 7: Focus existing riverfront properties such as Pioneer Park and Griffin Park toward the river.

*Objective A: Maintain and enhance **year-round public access** to the river at Griffin Park, the greenspace at the FNSB administrative center, Golden Heart Plaza and additional access points in order to enhance their contributions to the Yukon Quest, the Open North American, cross country ski races, Golden Days and other river-related activities.*

The PPMP includes Location as one of its themes, emphasizing the Chena River as one of its assets and a connection to the rest of the community. The Location theme includes these goals and intent statements:

- *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.*

The facilities projects proposed in the PPMP, including viewing platforms, interpretive signs, seating, food vendor, improved parking, a new north entrance and a new north pavilion are aimed at improving access and providing additional opportunities for the public to interact with and experience the river. These projects also help implement the CRFP:

CRFP Goal IV, Policy 2: Encourage public and private partnerships that facilitate appropriate access to, on and along the river.

Objective A: Provide for and encourage multi-modal transportation options, such as boat launches, canoe/kayak launch sites and river marina.

Objective G: Work to enhance the connection between Pioneer Park and downtown along the river corridor.

The long-term goal of enhancing river connections throughout the community is also echoed in both plans. Overall, the PPMP appears to be compatible with the CRFP.

Consistency with the FNSB Regional Comprehensive Plan

The FNSB Regional Comprehensive Plan is the overall guiding document for the Fairbanks North Star Borough. The CRFP has been adopted as an element of the Comprehensive Plan, and the PPMP is proposed to be adopted as an element as well.

The Comprehensive Plan designates this area as Urban, defined as the *area that is served or can be served with community water and sewer, and contains the most intensive residential, commercial, and industrial development*. Pioneer Park is ideally located to serve residents and visitors alike, and continued planned investment in the park is to the benefit of the community.

Land Use Goal 4 is *to enhance development opportunities while minimizing land use conflicts*. A modern master plan for Pioneer Park is likely to enhance future opportunities within the park.

Environment Goal 3 is *to protect natural systems*, and Strategy 11 is *to identify and plan for locations on public lands that provide for roadside pullouts that have scenic viewing opportunities*. Overall, the improvements identified within the PPMP consider the Chena River as an important natural asset to the community, and while it does not include roadside pullouts, the planned river overlooks and other improvements to the pedestrian pathway along the river certainly provide and protect scenic viewing opportunities.

Community and Human Resources Goal 1 is *to have services and facilities that enrich the quality of life for all residents*. Pioneer Park has long been recognized as an important community resource, and creating a plan for its future ensures that it continues to serve the community well.

This project appears to be compatible with the FNSB Regional Comprehensive Plan.

Recommendation

The Community Planning Department recommends that the Chena Riverfront Commission recognize Pioneer Park Master Plan as being consistent with the Chena Riverfront Plan. A draft motion of consistency for the Pioneer Park Master Plan is available below.

I move to recommend to the FNSB Mayor and Assembly, per FNSBC 4.32.090(G), that the Pioneer Park Master Plan is consistent with the draft Chena Riverfront Plan.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Request memo on Pioneer Park Master Plan
- Attachment B: Draft Pioneer Park Master Plan