

Approved PRC 9/8/05

**MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE  
PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT  
MEMORANDUM  
PRC # 05-038**

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**DATE:** September 8, 2005  
**TO:** Parks and Recreation Commission  
**FROM:** TK Tom Korosej, Park Planner  
**SUBJECT:** Proposed Park Land Acquisitions:  
I. Tract B-2B, Commodore Park Subdivision  
II. Fraction of Tract B, Muldoon Estates Subdivision

Parks and Recreation and the Heritage Land Bank have identified two tracts of land, one in the Independence Park area of the Central Park District, and a second parcel in the Muldoon area of the Northeast Park District, that could be acquired to meet neighborhood and community park needs in these underserved areas. The proposed acquisitions are consistent with the *Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facilities Plan*, which identifies park needs for the various park districts to achieve a desired Level of Service. The staff requests the Parks and Recreation Commission's concurrence with these proposed acquisitions.

**I. Tr. B-2B, Commodore Park Subdivision**

Background

According to the *Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facilities Plan*, the Central Park District will be deficient in both neighborhood parks (5-20 acres) and community parks (20-100 acres) within the next 20 years. The *Plan* indicates a current deficiency in parks in the Independence Park Subdivision area, which includes this subject property. The Independence park area is a relatively high-density residential area that has seen substantial recent development and influx of many new residents.

The *Plan*, in particular, recommends acquisition of park land in certain areas, including "at Lake Otis and Abbott for future Town Center." The subject property is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from the Abbott/Lake Otis intersection.

A need for park land was identified as early as the 1985 *Anchorage Park, Greenbelt and Recreation Facility Plan*, which indicated a need for both "neighborhood" and "mini-park" lands in the Independence Park area, as well as a proposed "greenbelt link" with planned bike and equestrian trails in the subject tract area. The *Areawide Trails Plan* shows a planned multi-use unpaved trail that would link this site with other parks in the area including Ruth Arcand Park and Tanglewood Park.

The property is within the Abbott Loop Community Council area. The Council as well as residents of the area have in recent years indicated a desire for park lands in the Council area, including the Independence Park area.

### Description

The subject parcel is 8.1 acres in area. Approximately one-third to one-half of the area is Category C (developable) wetlands, with most wetlands in the south and along the easterly boundary. The property fronts on the Independence Drive right-of-way, which provides the tract's public access but is not fully constructed.

The generally rectangular shape of the parcel would appear to give considerable flexibility for potential development. The upland area appears to be sufficient to meet a number of neighborhood park needs, such as for playgrounds and open play areas. It is expected that wetland areas could be used for development of an internal trail system and/or to provide for other beneficial passive recreation opportunities. Independence Drive would provide public access along the tract's east

Vegetation over the area is believed to have been substantially cleared or otherwise disturbed in the past; however, the area is largely overgrown now. The area is characterized by rolling terrain.

Construction of the adjoining portion of Independence Drive, and connection to O'Malley Rd. is in the Anchorage's *Long Range Transportation Plan* but has not been scheduled. The roadway may be constructed as part of adjoining private development in the next few years. Construction of this road segment should include extension of existing pedestrian and bicycle pathways.

The adjoining property to the north and south is privately owned and vacant; the property to the south is in use as a soccer field ("Chili Pepper Field"). The westerly boundary adjoins a residential subdivision. Public water and sewer utilities are located in the area potentially to provide services to the park property.

The acquisition cost would be approximately \$1.2 million, with funding from 2000 and 2001 park bonds for neighborhood park acquisition, North Abbott Loop area park acquisition, and Old Seward Highway area park acquisition.

## **II. Fraction of Tract B, Muldoon Estates Subdivision**

### Background

According to the *Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facilities Plan*, the Northeast Park District currently is deficient in neighborhood use areas (5-20 acres) and will become increasingly deficient also in community use areas (20-100 acres) and natural resource use areas within the next 20 years. The *Plan* indicates a current deficiency in parks in the Muldoon and DeBarr area that includes this subject property, and recommends acquiring neighborhood use park area in the East Muldoon area.

The property is within the Northeast Community Council area. The Council has in recent years indicated a desire for park lands in the Northeast Anchorage area.

While this proposed acquisition would benefit primarily the residents of Northeast Anchorage, the park land would be expected to have certain beneficial effects extending beyond the immediate neighborhood. Possible park improvements such as play fields could also serve the Northeast community.

#### Description

This proposed acquisition is a 12-acre portion of a larger existing tract of land adjacent to the South Fork of Chester Creek and Muldoon Road, east of the DeBarr Road intersection. Prior to acquisition the property would be subdivided. Neighborhood access would be from adjoining residential streets to the north and south, as well as through adjoining Windsong Park to the south. Improved community access would likely require development of more direct access from Muldoon Road, such as by expanding the half right-of-way extension of DeBarr Road along the tract's north boundary.

The site is generally level, with slight slope from east to west. Portions of the subject area have been disturbed by previous development, including placement of substantial fill. As park land the land would establish a greenbelt along a portion of this significant tributary to facilitate possible restoration of disturbed portions of the stream and adjoining area. Upland area would provide space for development of playfields and other recreation facilities. The quality of existing fill may affect some types of development.

The acquisition would also facilitate development of a multi-use paved trail that is part of the Anchorage *Areawide Trails Plan*, and facilitate development of additional amenities to increase passive and active recreation opportunities to enhance densely developed surroundings. The section of trail along this segment of stream would provide a connector between this principal developed area, Windsong Park and other public lands, and other portions of the municipality's planned trail system. The park land would serve future development nearby, including multi-family housing of the proposed Creekside Town Center.

The site offers southern exposure and views of the Chugach Mountains. Mainly along the creek corridor near the south boundary, the site includes some floodplain and "A" category (preservation) wetlands, affecting approximately 15 percent of the site. The wetlands and creek have the potential to provide high public recreational values including wildlife viewing as it connects to larger tracts of adjoining wetlands on the Fort Richardson Military Reservation. The subject park land would complement adjoining Windsong Park, an existing 14-acre neighborhood park that includes a pond, trails, and playground.

Chester Creek and the Chester Creek Greenbelt are identified in the draft *Anchorage Bowl Parks, Natural Resource and Recreation Facilities Plan* as the primary natural resource in the area. This proposed acquisition would be a complementary element in earlier Chester Creek Greenbelt plans and Corps of Engineers plans to restore habitat along Chester Creek.

A study prepared by the Municipal Planning Department for the Anchorage School District (school site selection) provides additional site information. That study notes that a 1998 Phase I

environmental review concluded that there is a low potential of hazardous substances affecting the site. According to the site-selection study, the eastern edge of the site lies within a high wind area identified in the 1980 *Anchorage Coastal Resource Atlas*, and the site may be subject to a moderately low to moderate seismic hazard rating, based on a 1979 study and the presence of uncompacted fill. These factors should not preclude beneficial park use and open space value.

Public water and sewer utilities are located in the area potentially to provide services to the park property.

The acquisition cost would be approximately \$1.2 million, with funding from 1999, 2000, and 2001 park bonds for greenbelt and East Anchorage area park acquisition.

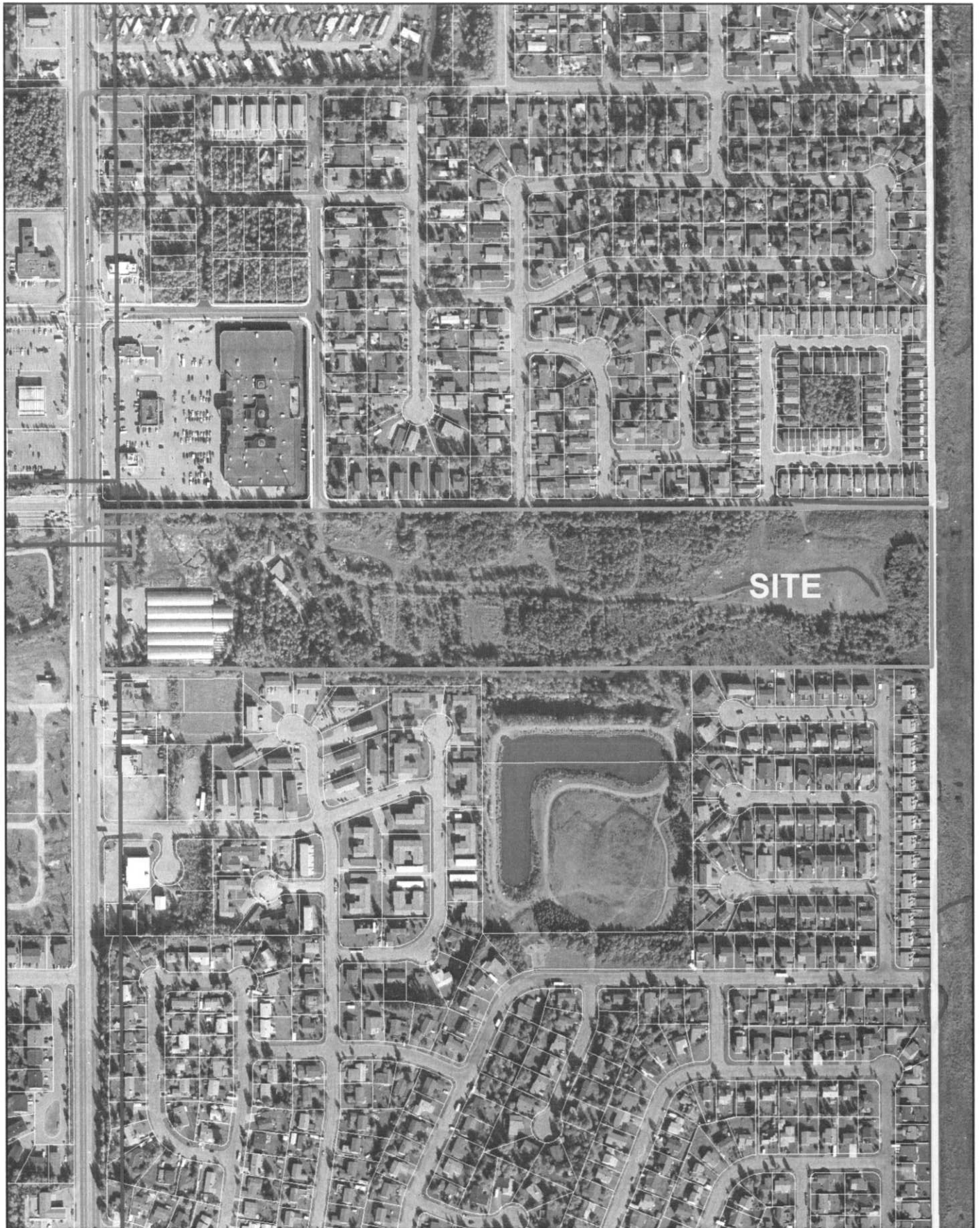
### **Recommendation**

The staff requests Parks and Recreation Commission concur with a recommendation to proceed with acquisition of the subject properties for park and recreation purposes.

The staff finds that the subject properties meet criteria set forth in the *Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facilities Plan*, and are suitable to meet recognized park needs in the respective areas. The staff believes that the properties would be appropriate additions to the Municipal park system.

Cc: Abbott Loop Community Council  
Northeast Community Council

# Muldoon Area Park Acquisition





# Independence Park Area Acquisition



100 50 0 100 200 300 400 Feet



 Wetlands



