



# MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

## PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

### MEMORANDUM

PRC # 2012-35



**DATE:** October 5, 2012  
**TO:** Parks and Recreation Commission  
**FROM:** Tom Korosei, Park Planner  
**SUBJECT:** Fire Station 9 Site Selection—Rabbit Creek Park Alternative

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#### Proposal

A portion of Rabbit Creek Park in southeast Anchorage has been identified as the preferred alternative site ("Site 19") for relocation of the Anchorage Fire Department's Station No. 9. Among the "three most desirable sites" identified in the Site Selection Study, only Site 19 is municipal park property. The Site Selection Study accompanies this memo for reference, noting the sites considered and showing a concept site plan for the fire station. The Planning and Zoning Commission is expected to review and act on the site selection report at its meeting Nov. 5. Community Councils will have had one or more opportunities to review the proposal.

#### Background

Rabbit Creek Park is categorized in the 2006 *Anchorage Bowl Park, Natural Resource, and Recreation Facility Plan* as a Natural Resource Use Area and identified as a potential elementary school park adjacent to Rabbit Creek Elementary School. The proposed fire station would occupy approximately 2.5 acres at the south end of the 8.8-acre park parcel, along DeArmoun Rd.<sup>1</sup> (An aerial photo with conceptual site boundary is attached.) An estimate of the fair market value of the subject 2.5 acres, based on information from MOA Property Appraisal, is \$407,200. The concept plan (Study, Fig. 6) for the fire station at this site occupies approximately half that area, leaving substantial area for future expansion or related use.

Records indicate that the subject tract was acquired by the Greater Anchorage Area Borough for park purposes in 1974, and has been officially recognized and enjoyed by the community as part of the municipal park system since at least 1975. The area was classified as a neighborhood park in the 1985 *Anchorage Park, Greenbelt and Public Facility Plan*.<sup>2</sup> The park remains substantially in its natural state, which is predominantly wooded with many mature trees, and moderate, upland terrain. The municipality has made some improvements for non-motorized access to and through the park for neighborhood use.

As part of the Turnagain View subdivision, other park parcels were dedicated in the 1970s as public open space and greenbelt, including an additional 2.6 acres adjoining the north boundary of the subject parcel.

The *Park Plan* notes that the southeast Anchorage Bowl area has relatively ample access to Natural Resource Use areas, but is deficient in neighborhood and community use areas and related development for active recreation. The Neighborhood Use park area nearest Rabbit Creek Park is Hamilton Park, approximately one-half mile away.

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<sup>1</sup> Records indicate that the original tract was 10 acres; it has been reduced in area for Lake Otis Pkwy. and DeArmoun Rd. right-of-way.

<sup>2</sup> It appears that the park was never formally dedicated by Assembly ordinance (ref. AMC 25.10.080).

The *Park Plan* recommends development of joint facilities with respect to Rabbit Creek Park and Rabbit Creek School. Rabbit Creek Park provides a natural resource area accessible to the adjoining elementary school for use in its education programs. The park also provides passive recreation area for neighborhood use, and habitat for wildlife. The park provides a buffer between a residential area to the east and highway traffic to the west. Currently the Parks and Recreation Department has no plans for active recreation improvements to the park.

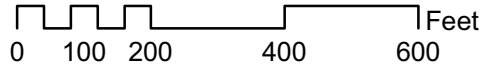
The proposed fire station development is not perceived as a direct or greater benefit to the park compared to some other potential sites. Moreover, use of municipal park land for other uses should be well supported by evidence of such need. If the southerly portion of the park were to be developed, a substantial portion of Rabbit Creek Park would remain to accommodate the park's current function and potential use as an Elementary School Park.

### **Recommendation**

If it is determined that a portion of Rabbit Creek Park should be used for the fire station, to mitigate potential impact from proposed development and loss of park area, the Parks and Recreation Department recommends the following, at a minimum, to be addressed by the responsible department or agency:

1. As part of the project, work with the neighborhood and the Parks and Recreation Dept., to identify and provide amenities such as access and connectivity improvements including trails and lighting where beneficial and appropriate.
2. With appropriate architectural and site planning, design and construct facilities and site improvements, including retaining as much existing vegetation as possible and providing adequate buffers, to preserve and visually enhance neighborhood character.
3. Secure formal dedication as appropriate for the remainder of Rabbit Creek Park to confirm the park's long-term status in the community.
4. Assist in maintaining the park by contributing to recommended wildfire prevention measures.

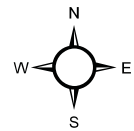
Cc: Erika McConnell, Planning Department  
Heath Landon, Public Works Department



Rabbit Creek Park with additions

**Legend**

- GDBO.TRAIL\_SEGMENT
- GDBO.PARK\_PARCELS





**MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE**  
**ANCHORAGE PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT**



RESOLUTION NO. 2012-08

Proposed Transfer of 2.5 Acres of Rabbit Creek Park for a Fire Station

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission serves in an advisory capacity to both the Mayor and the Assembly; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission has the responsibility and duty to provide for the long-term vision of our park system by ensuring that a balance of parks, natural resources, and recreation facilities provides for the health, welfare, and safety of all residents of the Anchorage Bowl; and

WHEREAS, the Municipal park known as Rabbit Creek Park is a Natural Resource Use area in the southeast part of the Anchorage Bowl, includes a tract of land acquired for park purposes in 1974, and remains substantially as natural open space, approximately 8.8 acres, for the community and adjoining public school; and

WHEREAS, the *Anchorage Fire Department Strategic Plan 2009-2015* identifies the need for relocating and/or remodeling Fire Station 9 in south Anchorage, and the existing site and structure are deficient for effective remodeling/renovation and continued use; and

WHEREAS, a Site Selection Study sponsored by the Anchorage Public Works Department considered multiple sites and recommended a 2.5-acre portion of Rabbit Creek Park as the preferred alternative site for Fire Station 9; and

WHEREAS, if up to 2.5 acres of Rabbit Creek Park is converted from municipal park use to use for a municipal fire station, approximately 6.3 acres of the parcel would remain, along with other public open space, for community and school park use; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that, if the Planning and Zoning Commission determines that a portion of Rabbit Creek Park would be better used for the fire station, the Parks and Recreation Commission recommends the following, at a minimum, to mitigate potential impact from proposed development and loss of park area:

1. As part of the project, in cooperation with the neighborhood and Parks and Recreation Dept., identify and provide amenities such as access and connectivity improvements including trails and lighting where beneficial and appropriate.
2. With appropriate architectural and site planning, design and construct facilities and site improvements, including retaining as much existing vegetation as possible and providing adequate buffers, to preserve and visually enhance neighborhood character.
3. Secure formal dedication as appropriate for the remainder of Rabbit Creek Park to confirm the park's long-term status in the community.
4. Assist in maintaining the park by contributing to recommended wildfire prevention measures.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Parks and Recreation Commission this 11th day of October, 2012.

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Chair  
Parks and Recreation Commission

ATTEST:

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John Rodda, Director  
Parks & Recreation Department