



**City of Wasilla**  
**Department of Museum and Recreation Services**  
**323 Main Street**  
**Wasilla, Alaska 99654**  
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**INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM 96-08**

The attached information, with an updated map, comprises a report on the results of the February 23, 1996 meeting regarding determination of the location of the Wasilla Wonderland Playground site at the Old Wasilla Airport.

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February 27, 1996

John Cooper, Director  
Department of Museum and Recreation Services  
Wasilla City Hall  
290 East Herning St.  
Wasilla, Alaska  
99687

Subject: Playground site location at the Old Wasilla Airport

Dear Mr. Cooper

Please find the enclosed letter of report regarding the public meeting held February 23, 1996 at the Wasilla City Hall.

I have attempted to tabulate, and summarize public comments made during the meeting. I have also located the location of the proposed playground based on the preference of those present during the meeting.

I think this information should help you to officially determine the playground's location.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,



Jonathan A. Schilk  
Landscape Architect

Enclosure A

## The following is a tally of comments regarding Old Wasilla Airport Park

1. Need open areas
2. Like looped paths
3. Parallel parking along Nelson Ave.
4. Keep walking to a minimum between parking and play areas, parking and sporting areas
5. Concern that access to the Iditarod Restart as shown on the Master Plan is on land the city does not own.
6. The city does not need another Botanical Park
7. The city does not need another Veteran's Memorial- all we want is two flagpoles.
8. A firehouse is an incompatible land use with a park
9. No buildings in the park
10. Rest rooms are necessary
11. Warm up shelters are okay to have
12. Install a band shell for outdoor performances
13. Install an amphitheater in the sledding hill
14. Put a post office building in the park
15. That won't work since the postmaster wants a 60,000ft<sup>2</sup> structure
16. Put a museum on the site
17. No organized team sports like baseball, soccer, or volleyball. Small basketball courts or tennis courts should be as big as they get.
18. Have a very large central open area to accommodate the following:
  - Iditarod Restart
  - Field activities
  - Classic car shows
  - Amphitheater
  - Sledding hills
  - Large outdoor gatherings
19. Install a skate board arena
20. Install a skating pond
21. Install a graffiti park where kids can paint art and have it stay up- contests
22. Combine skate board and graffiti park and ice skating (liability problem)
- \*\* Many people were concerned about his particular idea
23. Look at Cities like New York and its Central Park- It is really important to them to have the green spaces.
24. We have green spaces now, but we don't know about years from now, It all might be gone. No buildings, just park [facilities].

# Playground

1. Playground will be built using volunteer labor in 5 days.
2. It should be located near an electrical transformer to minimize costs of electricity- a site near the proposed ice skating rink was identified; this area is within 75' of a transformer. The cost is significantly higher (\$5,000) if located outside the 75' distance.  
\*\* A citizen said costs may be lessened or avoided if MEA can be talked into helping with the funding of lighting.
3. Parking for 50-200 cars
4. prevailing wind is a concern- establishment of a shelter belt of trees was mentioned
5. Locate play area near Nelson Ave.
6. Locate toilets (universally accessible is preferred)
7. Locate sources of light
8. Make it safe for children  
\*\* I believe this person meant keep site lines into the play area open
9. Unimpeded access into play area; Don't put the parking on the other side of a busy circulation way like the Restart or a high use paved path
10. Make the play area accessible to car with a cul-de-sac approach  
\*\* This idea makes the play area an ultimate destination and not one piece of the park along the road side.
11. Should there be a play area located on the east side of the lot?  
-No road access  
-VPA conflict with play area
12. Surround play area with parking
13. If access road is installed, will it be too busy?
14. Should the play area be located approximately where the proposed library is?
15. How shall we light the play area?
16. Prevailing winds are from the east.
17. It's windy all over the site- you have to plant some wind breaks.
18. The playground should be the only thing built in that whole park
19. Just plant trees and shrubs.
20. Don't put historic buildings in the park- they already have a place.
21. Install tolerable toilets that are wheelchair accessible.

## Observations:

The Old Wasilla Airport is "clean slate" upon which the citizens of Wasilla may draw a design suitable to their needs and tastes. The site's level topography, gravel soils, views of the Chugach Range, and its established starting point for the Iditarod Race makes the site suitable for many uses. The City, happily, has settled on making the site into a park.

The City of Wasilla presently has a Concept Plan of "Iditarod Park." This plan incorporates a wide range of elements typically and sometime atypically associated with parks. Team sport fields, skating ponds, walking paths, sledding hills, a library, a community center are among the many park uses the community wanted. One member of the community was heard saying, "It looks like everything everybody ever wanted is in this plan..." She went on to say there is no room for buildings in the Park.

This latest public planning meeting shed some light on issues important to those who attended. Many of those issues are listed on attached enclosures. Perhaps the most compelling desire of those people on the evening of February 23, 1996 was that the park should be just that—a park. People, with one exception, thought that civic structures such as: libraries, community centers, fire stations, museum complexes, and railroad depots do not belong in their park. Moreover, citizens think the only built structures should be an amphitheater (a land form vice bleachers) to view out door performing arts, associated parking, two flagpoles, walking paths, sledding hill, warm up shelters, and a playground. The site's 30+ acres is ample area to accommodate these uses while affording space for additional parking, a lighted loop for year round use, the Iditarod Restart, and several minor sport fields, such as: tennis and half-court basketball.

The omission of buildings, large playing fields, botanical gardens, veteran's memorial greatly widens the options for remaining site uses as well.

During the meeting, participants spoke at length about the placement of the proposed play area. The play area, designed by Leatherman, Inc., will be constructed with volunteer labor this year. The questions remaining were:

1. How does lighting affect the siting of the play area?
2. How will the parking area relate to the play area?
3. How will prevailing wind affect the siting of the play area?
4. How does existing traffic patterns affect the placement of the play area?

5. How can we plan so that these changes in traffic patterns won't adversely affect the play area?
6. How will the play area, once installed, affect traffic patterns?
7. How does all this stuff add up to a decision in siting a play area?

Although lighting is an important consideration in the placement of a play ground, it should not be the only deciding factor. One person mentioned that the play area should be located within 75 feet of a transformer; typically located along the street right of way. Although many play areas are indeed located within 75 feet of a road, they are not in my experience as busy as Nelson Avenue is or will become.

It should be remembered that the children will have ample light during the late spring, summer and early autumn. Sledding, skating and hockey will replace some playground use as winter waxes. If present funding levels will not allow lighting installation this year, it may be part of a later construction phase. The City may take the time to plan and budget funds to light pole installation. Moreover, The City may plan to install light poles with timed on-buttons. Lighting like this is a viable option already used in Anchorage and other Northern Cities. Lighting like this can provide better service for users of the play area while keeping energy costs down.

Citizens voiced a desire to provide parking around the play area for safety sake. One person said it would provide a [buffer] between other park uses, the road, and the children. It would provide direct access from parking to playground. While this idea is laudable, it may not be workable in terms of providing an aesthetically pleasing environment nor a functional one. In many cities, parking can be as close as 40', an easy walk for a tot or older child. It will also allow space to dissipate fumes from running car engines. Lastly, since the playground will be part of the larger park, it is an advantage to walk to the play area without having to walk by or through a parking lot. In summation everyone was in agreement that parking should be located *near* the play area.

Landscape planting for windbreaks was identified as being important to this site. Everyone present at the meeting agreed with this basic point. All were in agreement that conifers would provide the best wind breaks. One woman was concerned about maintaining sight lines into the play area to maintain parental supervision of the children. This is an important characteristic of any play area. One may position benches down wind of the windbreaks, and perhaps within view of cars parked in the lot, to maintain sight lines. Placing heavy landscape planting between the parking area and the play area is not a desirable characteristic.

Two possible locations for the proposed play area were discussed at length. The first is located in the **western half** of the tract near the site of the proposed skating area in last years Concept Plan. The second is located in the **eastern half** near the proposed parking lot south of the proposed warm-up shelter.

The following is a table of both positive and negative characteristics of the western and eastern options that were identified by the public.

The western location had the following positive characteristics in the view of those present:

1. It is located near a transformer for light.
2. It is accessible by car from Nelson Avenue
3. Nelson Avenue can carry the increased traffic level
4. It is located near a contributor to the project
5. There is more room available for parking
6. Access to the playground can still be made from the south once the road is built between the existing cul-de-sac located in the southwest corner of the tract and Nelson Avenue.
7. This location is perceived as being more safe because it is farther away from the busy corner of Lucille Street and Nelson.
8. More room was perceived as more options.

No negative issues were raised about a play area being located in the western end of the tract.

The eastern location had the following positive characteristics in the view of those present:

1. It may provide a cul-de-sac situation using Tommy Moe Drive. This would Tommy Moe Drive into a single purpose road for the benefit of the park.

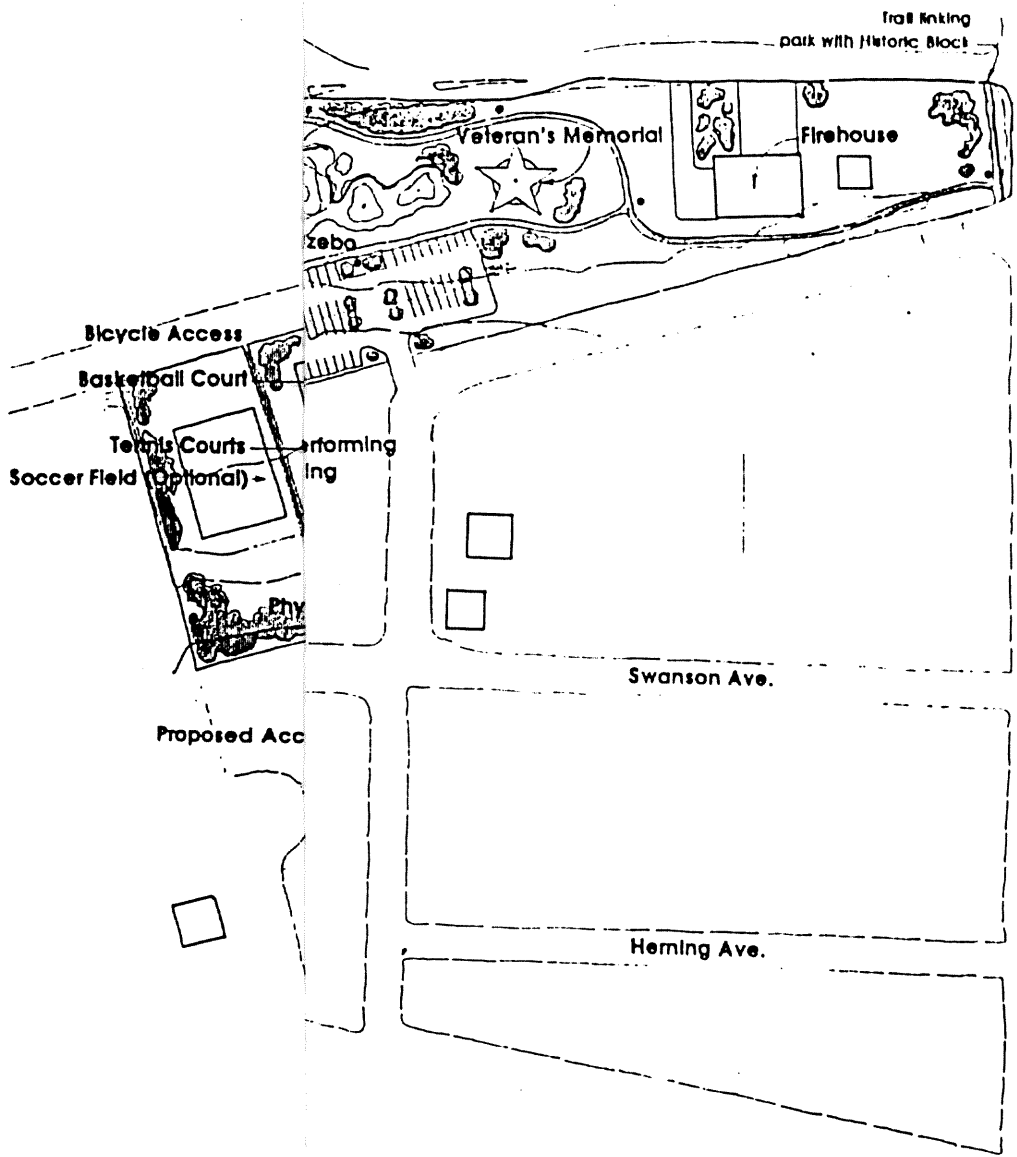
The eastern location had the following negative characteristics in the view of those present:

1. It will become a bottleneck to traffic
2. It is too close to the busy corner of Lucille Street and Nelson.
3. There is not enough space to accommodate parking and the play area and other activities going on there. Less options are there.
4. The Valley Performing Art Center was perceived to be incompatible with a play area (there was some disagreement on this point).
5. It is out of view shot of one of the primary donors to the project.

Clearly, the citizens identified more positive characteristics with the west end of the Old Airport than the east end. Moreover, no negative characteristics were mentioned. This contrasts with the east end. An informal, obviously non-binding vote, showed that a majority of the participants want the play area located in the western end of the Old Airport. In fact all who were present agreed on a location for the play area on a map (enclosure A) to this document, clearly identified a site located on the spot of the proposed community center and playground as identified on last year's Concept Plan.

In summation, I believe that this informal public input process showed the desire of the people who participated in the meeting. Although the record shows the number of persons participating in this planning session is somewhat less than anticipated. It is significant, however, that all those who were present and who voted (there was one person who abstained) wanted the playground in the western end of the tract, where it is fairly close to a transformer, where there is room for other uses without causing use conflicts, where it is easily accessible by car, and where it is more safe for the children.





600'

### ENCLOSURE Δ

<b>Iditarod Park</b>	
<b>City of Wasilla, AK</b>	
1531 Eagle St. #2 Anchorage, AK 99501	
907 279-8432	
Drawn in Cooperation with the Cannetos Group	