



CITY OF POCATELLO
Parks & Recreation Department – Memorandum

Date: 1-29-19
To: Pocatello Community Members
From: John Banks, Parks & Recreation Director
RE: Ross Park Master Plan – History, Mission/Vision/Goals, and Park Information, Characteristics & Considerations

History

Ross Park is the “gem” of the City of Pocatello’s park system, and has over 145 acres of available land, approximately 95 acres of which are currently developed. Ross Park is home to the City’s “Zoo Idaho”, Ross Park Aquatics Complex (RPAC), Skate Park, Municipal Band Shell, Animal Shelter & Katie’s Dog Park, Fort Hall Replica & Pocatello Junction, and Bannock Historical Museum. Numerous community-wide events are held each year in Ross Park, including the Pocatello Marathon, Spinderella, Municipal Band Concerts, Riverfest, Free Days at the Zoo, and Horseshoe Tournaments, as well as countless company & family group events at the picnic pavilions, and the list goes on and on.

As a result of Ross Park’s wide variety of leisure & recreational amenities and opportunities, previous Parks & Recreation Director Jerry Sepich initiated a comprehensive master plan process for the park – to help chart the future of this critical community asset. In the late 2000’s, a Steering Committee consisting of key community stakeholders & staff was assembled to serve as facilitators & drivers of the planning process, and to solicit & incorporate community input/desires for the park, which in 2012 & 2013, resulted in a conceptual site plan developed by local architect Bill Jackson of Jackson Land Design. Due to the retirement of Director Sepich, combined with lack of capital improvement resources, the conceptual site plan has been on hold since 2013.

Due to the time lapse, Parks & Rec. staff thought it prudent to re-examine the 2013 conceptual plan. In addition, there have also been several notable things that have changed in & around Ross Park that should be taken into consideration, including: the South Valley Connector now being in place, houses at south end of the park having been removed, the new Animal Shelter/upper level dog park & lower level permanent restrooms being completed/renovated, as well as a new RPAC Concession building planned and the Zoo Idaho Master Plan (near completion) – which includes a revised vision of Zoo Idaho from Zoo Superintendent and I. Therefore, in the Fall of 2018, the Master Plan was once again brought forward for a “fresh look” and additional input solicitation from community members & original process stakeholders, with the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board serving as the current Steering Committee.

Mission

To develop a 5-20 year Master Plan for Ross Park, based on community input and steering committee guidance, which will enrich its recreational, cultural and tourist opportunities.

Vision

To guide the future development of Ross Park, while maintaining, nurturing and enhancing its natural beauty and historical, educational & recreational features.

Goals

- 1) **Create a conceptual Site Plan for Ross Park – Identifying needed amenities & facilities** *(access/entrances, traffic flow patterns, parking, location of amenities, shelters, passive areas, sports fields, Ft. Hall improvements, Trails, landscaping, utilities, maintenance considerations, protection of sensitive areas, etc.).*
- 2) **Determine associated Cost Estimates**
- 3) **Develop Improvements Implementation Strategy – for City Council consideration** *(phased over 5-20 years, and exploring all possible sources of funding: General Fund, bonding/general obligation, grants/donations/sponsorships, contractual agreements, etc.).*

Other Park Information, Characteristics & Considerations

- Fort Hall Replica Complex Master Plan (2008) is incorporated into overall Ross Park Plan – including “Amphitheater” adjacent to Ft. Hall Replica
- Fort Hall Replica Complex/Zoo Idaho – Landscape Improvements Preference (Native Plants)
- Veteran’s Memorial (located on Upper Park level)
- 9-Hole Disc Golf Course (Upper Park level)
- Three large-capacity pavilions/shelter currently available for reservation in park
- Two playground/play structure areas (Lower & Upper levels), including swings
- “Best in State” Horseshoe Pits Complex located on Lower Park level
- Baldwin Works Steam Locomotives (2) & Caboose located on Lower Park level (adjacent to Horseshoe pits)
- Potential for expansion of Greenway Paths & connectivity in and around park
- Close proximity to the Chief Pocatello Statue & Visitors Center (tourist attractions), as well as I-15
- Basalt Cliffs & multiple Rock Climbing areas throughout park
- Many beautiful natural areas throughout the park
- Park Maintenance & Outdoor Recreation/Team Sports shops located in the park
- “Disconnect” (vehicular/pedestrian) between Upper and Lower park levels
- Slope between Upper and Lower park levels
- Inadequate current parking
- ADA accessibility challenges in some park/Zoo areas
- 2nd Avenue currently bisects Lower park area
- In various areas of the park, lava beds could make it difficult to excavate
- Water & sewer currently not available throughout the park