



OPEN HOUSE OVERVIEW

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Trails Initiative is one of the seven areas of focus that the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation has adopted to make Anchorage the best place to Live. Work. Play. by 2025. Trails are an important part of Anchorage's identity - they provide recreation opportunities, serve as transit systems, and attract a talented workforce to Anchorage.

A survey found that 95% of Anchorage residents agree that our trail system contributes towards making Anchorage a great place to live, while 66% of Anchorage adults would like to use the trails more often. In an effort to improve our trails for all users, a Signage & Wayfinding Plan is in development to create a safer, more easily navigable trail system for our city.

PROJECT PURPOSE

Signage & Wayfinding Plan Goals:

- Project consistent image for trails and pedestrian routes.
- Safely guide residents and visitors to landmarks, facilities, and community services.
- Brand neighborhoods and establish a strong sense of place and community pride.
- Improve community health by encouraging walking, bicycling, and public transit.
- Lead to a more legible and connected city for residents, commuters, and tourists.

Local landscape architecture firm Earthscape and national wayfinding expert MERJE are working together to lead the wayfinding process that will help make Anchorage's trail system WORLD CLASS!

OPEN HOUSE DATE AND LOCATION

Selkregg Chalet at Russian Jack Springs Park
1600 Lidia Selkregg Lane, Anchorage
Tuesday, March 1, 2016
5:00- 7:00 pm

NOTICES

The Anchorage Trails Wayfinding Plan Public Open House was advertised through several methods. An open house email invitation was sent to multiple targeted email lists including to Trails Initiative members, people who provided comments and feedback on the neighborhood icons, the Federation of Community Council master email list, Anchorage Assembly members, Anchorage legislators and the Parks & Recreation Commission. The Anchorage Park Foundation posted meeting information on their Facebook page and created a Facebook event for the open house, which Anchorage Parks & Recreation re-posted to its Facebook page.

ATTENDANCE

A total of 38 stakeholders signed in at the Open House. There were also 8 project staff in attendance. The Open House sign in sheet is attached to this report.

OPEN HOUSE RECAP

5:00- 5:15 P.M.

The first 15 minutes of the meeting were used to allow attendees to arrive, sign in and find seats.

5:15- 6:40 P.M.

A welcome and project overview began at approximately 5:15 P.M., followed by a project presentation, both delivered by project staff. The presentation began with a brief overview of the concept of wayfinding and similar projects that the wayfinding company MERJE has developed. Next, three Anchorage Trails wayfinding alternatives were presented, along with photo renderings of some sign types on a trail. The presentation was also used as a question-answer time. Many attendees provided feedback, asked questions or requested clarification during the presentation.

6:40- 7:00 P.M.

The final 20 minutes of the meeting was used to allow attendees to view project boards of each of the presented alternatives and to speak with project staff one-on-one or in small groups about the presentation. There was also opportunity for attendees to fill out a survey and provide written comments on the wayfinding alternatives presented.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Survey sheets were available for attendees to provide written feedback. Eleven (11) surveys were filled out and returned to project staff at the meeting. Project staff wrote down questions, comments and notes during the project presentation.

MEETING SUMMARY

The following summary of the Wayfinding Plan Open House describes the three wayfinding plan alternatives that were presented and discussion generated from the presentation.

WAYFINDING PLAN ALTERNATIVES

OPTION 1

Option 1 Design:

Neutral color pallet with concrete and metal materials

Design gives opportunity for local art/patterns to be stamped on concrete materials

Not a color coded theme, based on identity of trail through trail names

All signage uses a transition material (like metal) before going into ground (for protection against decay)

Neighborhood icons are a separate layer in Option 1; they can be layered in to the design on banners, stamped concrete, etc.

Option 1 Discussion:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards requires directions signs to be at least 7 feet tall. Taller signs also tend to reduce vandalism.

In this option there is opportunity to incorporate neighborhood icons through sculpture, banners, stamped concrete, etc., rather than on directional signs.

The materials used in Option 1 can be changed (for example, wood can be used in place of concrete).

All signs will still be attached to a transitional material base to discourage damage to the base of signs like rot or decay (where the sign goes into the ground). If signs become vandalized or damaged, sign posts can be removed while the footer is left in place.

OPTION 2

Option 2 Design:

Incorporates native heritage and language into signage

Uses color from Anchorage Trails logo (blue) and color codes the trail systems with their own color

Signage shows trail name in English and Dena'ina language, and shows neighborhood name

Uses stone and wood as primary materials

Option 2 Discussion:

More colors used than in Option 1. Each trail has its own color that is used as an identifier.

Color coding the trails is not the only solution for wayfinding. Color tends to become diluted when placed outdoors.

Color coding can work well with signs and maps, but is meant to be supporting information. Primary wayfinding is through text on signage.

Uses wood as primary material with metal and concrete transition base on posts

The stonework material used in Option 2 is a vandalism deterrent because it is not a smooth surface.

Sideways vertical sign text is a graphic design standard. Stacked vertical type in which the letters are not turned can become more difficult to read.

Sign text is vertical rather than horizontal so that signage fits in narrow spaces.

OPTION 3

Option 3 Design:

Incorporates neighborhood icons more heavily than other two options

Uses native languages

Trails are color coded

SUMMARY OF POST-PRESENTATION DISCUSSION

Could be beneficial to include tall directional signs where the trail and street meet.

The frequency of sign placement is still being worked through. The intention of the plan is not to clutter the trails with signage. There is no rule of thumb as to the frequency of signage; it is based on conditions of the trail and need. Initially the plan will overprogram sign placement, then pull back on the number of signs.

There will necessarily be a sign at every intersection on the trail. Will depend on the need.

Emergency locator information will be included on signage at decision points.

While dog waste is an issue along trails, it is not part of this wayfinding plan. However, there is opportunity for etiquette and rules to be included in the signs. This wayfinding plan does not get into what the signs will say specifically; that is a management decision for the Municipality.

The current rendering photos (of the signs placed on the trails) do not show how the signs look against spring foliage. MERJE is aware of how signage looks against green trees. Color can help signs pop against foliage.

There are multiple components to this wayfinding effort. Maps, phone apps, etc., can support trail users and users who do not speak or read English.

To ensure that we don't rework the signage again down the road, this system could be adopted as the standard to use going forward.

In regards to funding, the Anchorage Park Foundation and Anchorage Parks & Recreation will have to work together to find funding sources.

In terms of cost variability between the three options, stone will increase the fabrication costs. Gateway signs are always the most variable.

This plan does not yet incorporate lighting into the signs. If lighting is included, it will probably be LED lights that shine from the side or above signs.

There is a metric for determining how far out to show destinations on signage (for example: Library, 0.5 miles).

At the conclusion of this project the MOA will own the designs. Could share the design with private entities who want to use.

The signs should have enough contrast so that they're easy to read and very visible.

There needs to be more discussion on neighborhood icon integration into wayfinding plan.

While the trails do not need to be cluttered with signs, there also needs to be enough signage that the plan works. There is a rule of thumb that if wayfinding is solved for a first time user, it is successful.

There is opportunity for interpretive signs along the trails. One of the sign designs is an interpretive panel. Not the 45 degree kiosk-type sign, but one that is appropriate for more narrow spaces or when space is limited.

Most of the materials shown should last 10- 12 years in the elements.

There will be an online survey available for feedback and comments. It is the same paper survey that is available at the meeting.

PILOT PROJECT DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The Anchorage Community Land Trust was awarded \$30,000 in matching funds by the Anchorage Park Foundation to install wayfinding signs along Ship Creek, through Mountain View, to the Glenn Highway bike trail.

The pilot project has components that will test all proposed sign types, and will be a good way to test what works and what doesn't work.

With this project in the ground, it could be easier to apply for other grants and funding sources for other wayfinding projects.

The pilot project could be a good opportunity to explore the street-to-trail transition with signage. Would require coordination with the state and city DOT.

UPCOMING PROJECT SCHEDULE

-Project Survey: A public online survey will be distributed to meeting attendees and the larger Anchorage community via email to gather feedback on the Wayfinding Plan options. All survey responses and comments should be received by Friday, March 25, 2016.

-The Wayfinding Plan will be presented to the Parks & Recreation Commission on May 12, 2016 for approval.

-The Wayfindign Pilot Project will be implemented in Summer 2016.

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

Comments, feedback and questions about the Wayfinding Plan can be sent to Trails@AnchorageParkFoundation.org.