

Pioneer Park Development Public Comments

February 2, 2021

Thanks Cathy,

I'm pleased to hear that there is some movement on the Pioneer Park improvements.

I recall some preliminary drawings were provided by the City to fulfill their commitment following the neighborhood meeting from 2011- see notes attached. The communication obviously broke down and the project fell off the City's list for quite some time after that . If those documents and drawings are discovered they should be included in the presentation and I am requesting a copy.

In addition, to provide some context and history around this project I request the attached meeting notes (**below**) be included in the presentation being provided and posted on the website under Pioneer Park on the day of the meeting.

Thanks again for your work on this,

Peter Schertz

Pioneer Park Neighborhood Meeting

January 6, 2011

Neighbors in attendance: Peter Schertz, Tim Wolf, Molly Mickel, Don Gordon, Marty Adams, Mike Fenton, Bill Bowlby, Robert Lea, Tonya Sakadinsky, Jane Vogt

City staff in attendance: Scott McClain, Ron Moore, Cathy Metz

Suggested comments received from neighbors:

1. Keep the natural area at the north end of the park (potential archeological site)
2. Existing play area is frequently used by the low income Mercy Housing residents
3. Kill the existing ant hill near the playground equipment
4. Improve the zone around the existing play equipment and keep this equipment
5. Add new toddler playground equipment and consider ability to view the toddler play area from the covered picnic shelter
6. Add a bench or picnic table near the playground area
7. Keep an open grass play area in the park
8. Provide a portable toilet in the summer months (May – August) particularly if Park Permits continue to increase for Pioneer Park. No permanent restroom should be constructed.
9. Plant more trees and shrubs in the park, perhaps along the perimeter
10. Buffer the Sakadinski home and fence from the park
11. Neighbors might be willing to assist with payment for trees and shrub improvements
12. Peter Schertz to be the neighborhood contact with the City

Next steps:

1. The City will prepare concept plan alternatives in the Spring 2011 for the park improvements and provide to the neighborhood group for their comments
2. Pioneer Park improvement plan with a cost estimate to be completed for consideration by the City for inclusion in the 2012 Budget

February 6, 2021

City of Durango,

We, John and Erin Brach, are contacting you today on behalf of our neighborhood regarding a letter received from Cathy Metz / City of Durango on January 6th, 2021. The letter states that the Parks and Recreation Department are proposing a new playground and improved ADA access to Pioneer Park in 2021. We see potential benefits to the project and are willing to consider and support the project and the changes it may bring to the neighborhood. We request that the following items be addressed when evaluating the proposal and potential options for this project: traffic, parking, restroom access, privacy/maximum structure height, and maintaining greenspace.

1. Traffic

By car, the Pioneer Park neighborhood is accessible by only one entrance/exit at 37th and Main Ave. This entrance/exit is at the top of a steep hill, has no traffic light, and adjoins the main throughfare of town.

By foot, our neighborhood is accessible two ways:

- By the above-mentioned street entrance/exit
- By an unofficial path adjacent to the railroad tracks and newly completed trail on Silverton Ave.

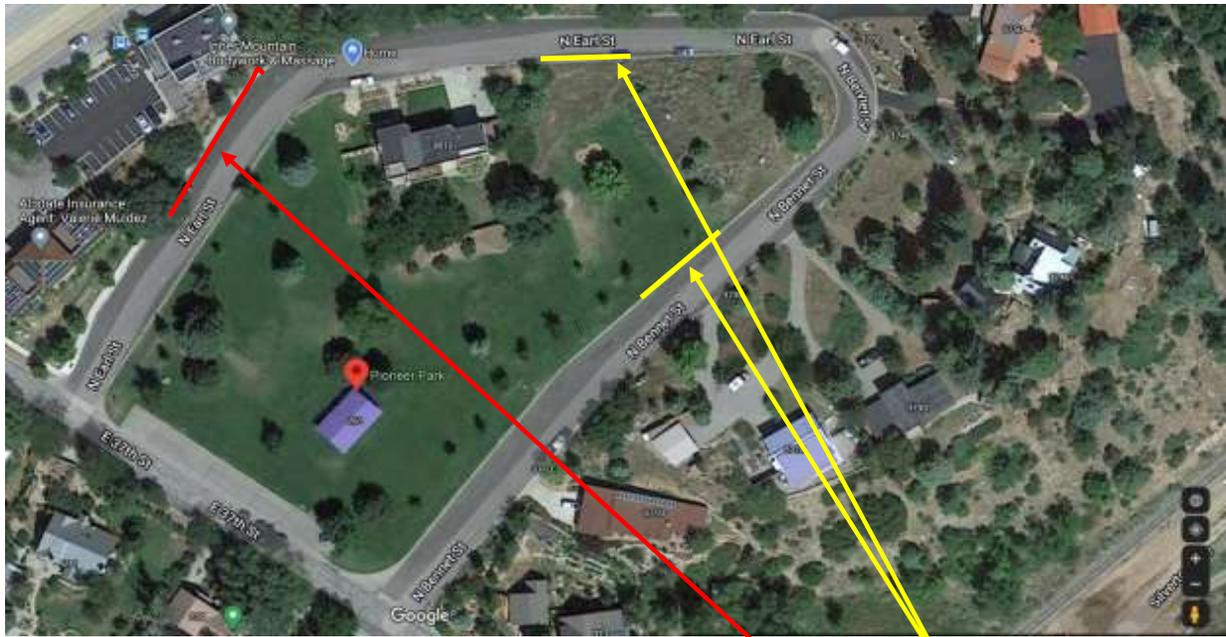
Should the project result in additional traffic into our neighborhood this could pose potential issues.

The road entrance into our neighborhood already poses potential safety issues relating to entering traffic on Main Ave. At peak traffic times of the day, it can be challenging to safely navigate this intersection. In poor weather, the steep hill can make it impossible to exit the neighborhood without good snow tires. These things may be an issue for patrons unfamiliar with these intricacies of that intersection.

Additionally, patron usage of the unofficial path from the city lot at the end of 37th street into the Pioneer Park neighborhood may inadvertently have patrons trespassing on private homeowners' property. We do not want an official path constructed from the river trail into our neighborhood and have serious concerns about the potential for increased traffic along the unofficial path that exists. We would not want any signage or increased visibility of Pioneer Park from the river trail as this would pose a serious safety hazard if they attempt to cross the railroad tracks or trespass across private property.

2. Parking

Currently, there are designated parking spots on 37th street and on-street parking around Bennett street and Earl street. The parking on 37th street is often utilized by patrons accessing the pavilion and landscaped portions of the park adjacent to the pavilion. On-street parking is utilized by patrons "hanging out" in their cars on North Earl street, often actively littering our neighborhood with empty beer cans, fast food debris and general garbage. Patrons utilizing the current playground structure/swings and greenspace on the north end of the park will often utilize on-street parking to the north and south of the equipment.



Red – Loitering and Littering
Yellow – Play structure

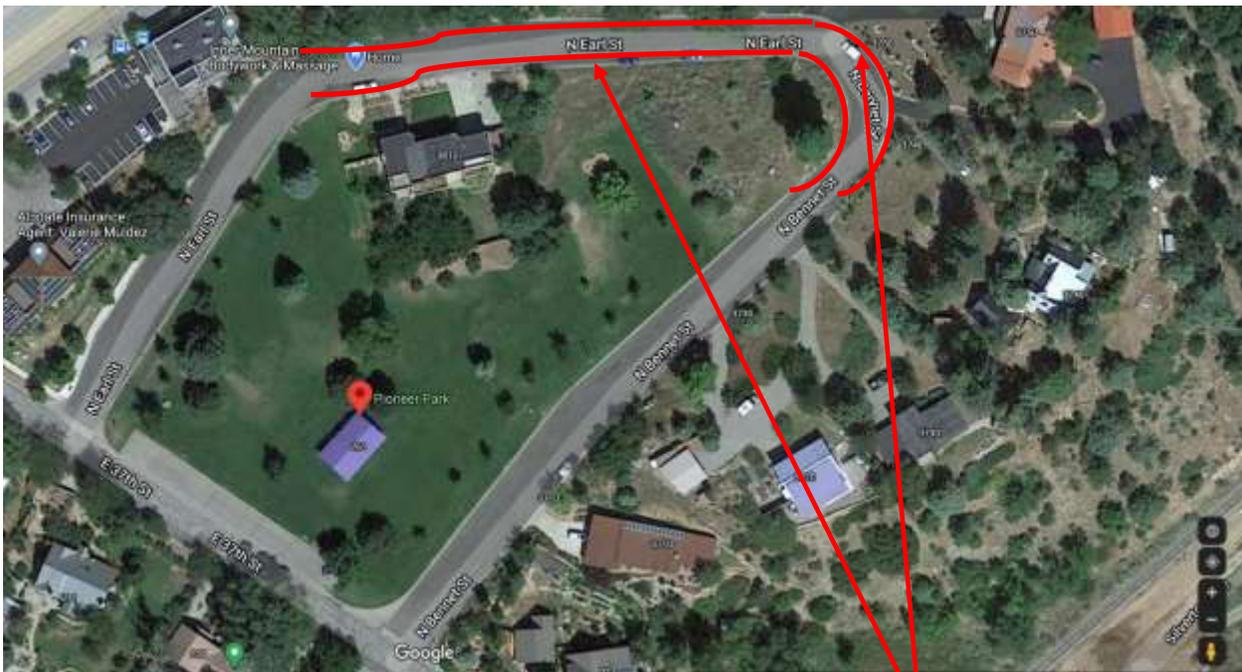


Littering in action –
West side of North Earl
St





Additionally, seasonally, there are Mild-to-Wild employees that utilize on-street parking at the north end of the park for both N. Earl and Bennett streets.



Depending on where the proposed project is located, parking would need to be evaluated and adjusted from the current state. Street parking in our neighborhood needs to be addressed and better managed. Specifically, parking related to Mild-to-Wild needs to be mitigated in our neighborhood to preserve safety for our neighbors and potential park patrons.

On-street parking utilized by Mild to Wild – often bumper to bumper along both sides of street

Measuring from curb to curb on N. Earl street, the street is a maximum of 36 feet wide. Taking similar measurements on the north side of Bennett street, the street is a maximum of 38 feet wide. Based on

our research, a street should be a minimum of 39 feet wide if cars are parking on both sides of the street. (2 x 1-1.5 feet for curb clearance + 2 x 8 feet for vehicle allocation + 20 feet for emergency vehicle clearance between cars). The current scenario does not meet this standard and is unsafe; if increased traffic is brought to the park, this will only worsen.

Should the playground be re-located closer to the current parking/pavilion area we anticipate the current parking spots would be utilized more readily, as it would be closer to the playground structure.

3. Restroom Access

Currently there are no restrooms located at Pioneer park. We do not want restrooms at the park.

We request that restrooms be out-of-scope of this project and any/all future projects. Restrooms should not be necessary for a neighborhood park, as “neighbors” can simply go back to their house if they need to use the restroom. We believe restrooms will lengthen the stay of patrons using the park, and invite non-park users to the area to simply access the restrooms.

4. Structure Height / Privacy

Our house is the only house residing “within” Pioneer park. Our back yard is fully fenced in and we utilize our back yard for both our personal enjoyment and for our dog’s enjoyment. We request that any new park structures/equipment maintain at least the current level of privacy that we have with the current layout. To achieve this, we request that new play structures be placed near the current pavilion to limit line of sight into our backyard and be of a height which maximally limits a clear view into our fenced yard.

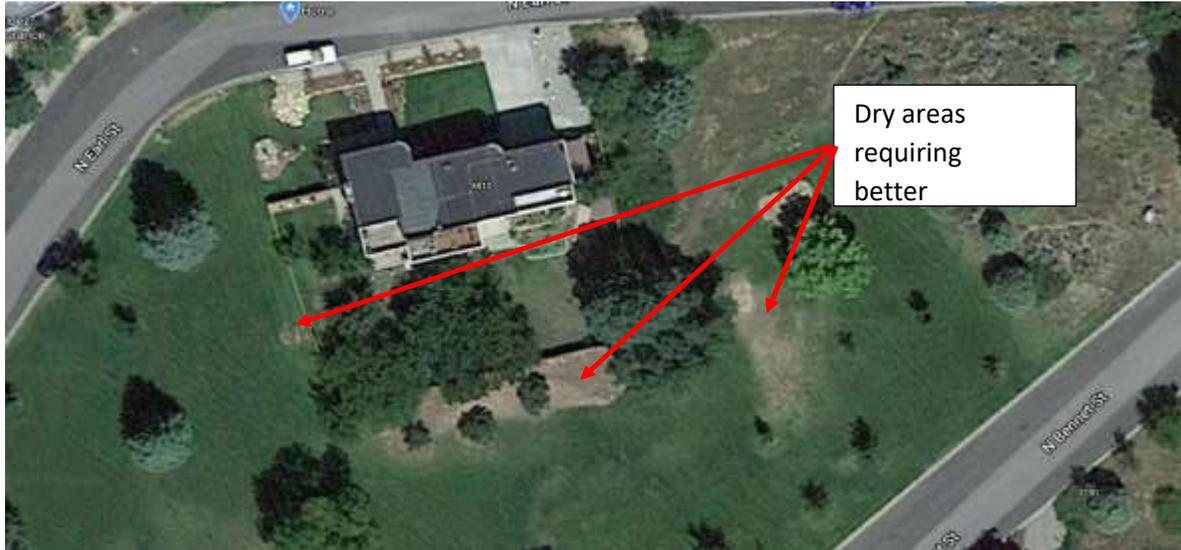


5. Greenspace

The park consists of a small playground space on the north end, a pavilion on the south end and the remaining space is natural / greenspace. Most park patrons utilize the pavilion and grassy space sprawling across the property. When the park was initially scoped out, greenspace and natural space

were very important to the neighbors of Pioneer park. We feel it is important to continue to honor their opinions and maintain as much greenspace as possible. Greenspace is the primary use of current patrons and would be important to them.

Currently, there are small portions of the greenscape that are under-watered and make maximal usage of the park impossible. We request as part of the upgrade process, that the irrigation of the park be improved to fully maintain the vitality of the greenspaces that exist. Improvements to the watering of the grass areas directly south of our fence, directly east of our fence and near the current swings would be requested.



Thank you for your time and please let us know how we can continue to assist with this process and with improving Pioneer Park and our neighborhood.

Sincerely,

John and Erin Brach

February 20, 2021

Let's try to get native plants in the buffer areas of Pioneer Park.

Rae Moeller

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **National Audubon Society** <audubonconnect@audubon.org>



Native plants help birds weather the change

Did you know that native plants can help birds as they face a warming world?

Birds—whether migratory visitors or the backyard friends we see year-round—face myriad threats, including our warming climate. As a home gardener, [there are small steps you can take](#) to protect them and create a brighter future for us all.

Native gardens not only provide food, shelter and nesting sites for birds but can also reduce the resources needed to keep your yard or garden lush. Best of all, native plants and trees are natural sponges for greenhouse gases. Learn how to give your garden a home-field advantage against climate change with native plants.

February 20, 2021

Dear Ms Metz:

Thank you for the zoom meeting and your followup. Please excuse my delay in response.

We would appreciate your continued interest in our park. We hope the issues raised below are of interest to you and you could perhaps address them before proceeding further on the issues you presented on 2/11/21.

It seemed as if the consensus (perhaps unanimous) of the zoom neighborhood participants of the above meeting was an expressed interest in improving the park as natural habitat / open space with some landscaping and possibly one or two landscape boulders.

We think the most significant point of the meeting was that not one person said anything in favor of having any playground equipment installed or having any real park changes. Perhaps there was a request for a small BBQ unit on a stand near the pavilion. Also perhaps provision of Handicap parking access at pavilion.

There were 8 or 10 questions for neighbors attending from your staff after audiovisual images of possible playground project options were presented. But not one person seemed interested in having these any of these projects constructed. Some people expressed distinct opposition to any more elaborate facilities.

Perhaps this distinct neighborhood lack of enthusiasm also happened 8 or 10 years ago when park changes were presented. As a result few or no changes were made.

Thank you for providing emails for Chief Brammer and Levi Lloyd of Public Works. If you could keep them and us informed of your departments intentions, plans and schedules we would appreciate it.

It seems that simply making Pioneer Park safer for park users in terms of addressing uncontrolled dogs, drug users, littering and no stop signs or safe access to Main Street would be a beneficial focus for your departments future efforts.

One resident expressed a concern that there was a distinct danger from the railroad to the pedestrians using the newly finished River Trail system if trail users tried to cross the tracks to access Pioneer Park. That same neighbor apparently urged your department to delay any Pioneer Park improvements until your department was able in a timely way to accurately assess the future interplay between River Trail impact in traffic, parking and utilization of Pioneer Park. There were concerns about the unleashed dogs chasing the deer in the park.

Would you be so kind as to contact Animal Control and Colorado Wildlife department on some other concerns raised at the meeting?? There have numerous (virtually weekly) instances of unleashed dogs and their impact on the deer that seem to use the park as a pasture? The deer are chased on a weekly basis but it hasn't deterred them. But the loose dogs will eventually result in harm to human park users, wildlife or other dogs.

We think the consensus was that rather than building more things in Pioneer Park, it would be better to improve its current operation in terms of traffic, littering and animal control safety. I have called animal control for years to no avail on unleashed dogs. The pit bulls concern me. I am tired of calling.

Like wise neighborhood residents themselves have been forced to pick up the fast food trash and glass bottles left by the occupants of the parked vehicles on Earl Street drug use area. Leaving broken glass and trash in the street encourages more deterioration.

Rather than a do it yourself park patrol from the neighbors, the city should be doing a better job controlling its own park. Since I have owned our house on Bennett Street and raised a family there since 1986, I feel my opinion should be given some weight in these issues.

Having a local marijuana store a block away from Pioneer Park has attracted an increasing number of impaired recreationalists who litter. You were provided, prior to the meeting, with photos of these park users, their numerous parked vehicles and their litter on ground next to their vehicles. As this summer unfolds and the interplay between Pioneer Park and River utilization develops, impaired recreationalists may have problems accessing the River Trail from over the railroad tracks. Thoughtful park administration will avoid issues that would make the park less of an asset and more of a liability to the neighborhood and city as a whole.

Please excuse any grammatical or word processing errors or mistaken email forwarding if this letter. I haven't really proof read it. I am writing it on a cell phone. I am pretty unfamiliar with technology and current bureaucratic protocol. Also my wife is telling me we have to go shopping and I have spent enough time typing since I am a very slow typed.

Thank you!

Frederick Moeller

February 22, 2021

Thanks again for the meeting regarding improving Pioneer Park. Please accept the attached comments in regard to this effort.

2/21/2021

To: Durango Parks and Rec Director and Staff

Cc: Durango City Manager and Durango City Council

Thanks for the virtual meeting on February 11th regarding Pioneer Park Improvements. It would have been appropriate to open the meeting with an apology to the Pioneer Park neighbors. 10 years ago, on 1/6/2011, a Pioneer Park neighborhood meeting was arranged with P&R staff to discuss appropriate improvements to the park. (See notes from that meeting on page 3 below). As a result of that meeting a Pioneer Park conceptual plan drawing was soon developed, and there were commitments made by P&R staff to develop cost estimates intended for inclusion in the 2012 budget.

There has been NO meaningful communication with the Pioneer Park neighborhood and virtually no progress following that meeting 10 years ago. The neighbors are due an apology, especially those who attended 10 years ago. The excuse of lack of staff capacity which was offered at the recent meeting is a poor one. It is obvious that neighborhood parks are a low priority for P&R leadership, despite these parks consistently ranking high in community surveys. Staff capacity is unduly consumed by a few high-profile mega projects that are deemed important by P&R

leadership. I am optimistic that the recent park meetings hosted by P&R are a sign that neighborhood parks are deserving of the limited staff capacity.

Our family regards Pioneer Park as a community asset. Like all parks in the Durango Park system, it should ultimately be improved for the community that benefits from it. Our family is fortunate to be immediate neighbors of Pioneer Park - we are intimately familiar with the park as well as the patterns of use of the park by the community. It is from this context and motivation that we offer these comments - with the goal of the community taking more pride in and enjoying this park to the greatest extent possible.

We offer the following comments – those with a “*” had their origin in the list from the meeting 10 years ago and are thus LONG overdue.

- *Maintain the natural area at north end of park as natural vegetation. This area could be improved with more plantings of natural vegetation.
- *The existing swing set and arch bars are the last equipment left after removal of all other play equipment from this area. We request that this equipment NOT be removed – it’s durable and continues to be used.
- *The zone around the existing play area needs improved care as far as irrigation and tree/shrub plantings as well as ant hill removal.
- *A bench or two and/or picnic table would be appropriate at the north play area.
- More play equipment would also be appropriate in this area which already has existing equipment. We do not favor congregating all the play equipment near the large existing pavilion as has been suggested by others. Distributing park use throughout the park acreage makes the most sense. We’re in favor of simple, natural looking play equipment that blends with the surroundings and that is still enjoyable to children. The brightly colored plastic play equipment that has become the norm in many parks would not be appreciated here.
- *Plant more trees and shrubs throughout the park while maintaining open spaces where they are traditionally used for slackline, kickball and other uses. More trees, and in particular conifers would be welcome additions. Shrubs would be appropriate as well.
- *Plant more trees near the perimeter of the park adjacent to the parking lot. The parking lot could meet the City landscape standard by doing so.
- *Buffer the Sakadinski (now Brach) home and fence from the park. Why has this taken SO long to achieve?
- *provide a toilet. ALL parks in our system should be equipped with a toilet. No running water or heat is necessary. Park guests need a toilet – it’s that simple.
- The turf care in Pioneer Park is exceptional. That was not noted in the meeting, but it deserves to be. My understanding is that this park is still managed by the City’s organic management standard.
- The tree care in the park could be improved. There is an ongoing issue of trees being injured and often girdled by mowing and weed whacking equipment (photos are included on page 4 below). Solutions should be found for this. At one time, mulch rings were installed to eliminate this damage, but they soon grew back in with grass. Planting trees and then slowly killing them with maintenance equipment does not improve the park and it wastes money.
- Pioneer Park is easily accessible only by car and meets none of the multimodal or P&R/Animas River Trail goals. Due to poor sidewalk maintenance, the park is challenging to access by foot even for an able person. A disabled person has no chance of access. The current readily used access points by foot and bike all encourage and apparently condone trespassing on private property.
- The parking/loitering and often illegal activity that occurs adjacent to the park on N. Earl St. is a significant issue in the Pioneer Park neighborhood. P&R Dept should take some responsibility to correct this issue. It’s an unfair burden for adjacent park neighbors to be told that it is a private citizen issue to notify law enforcement.

Thanks again for the virtual meeting. We are hopeful Pioneer Park improvements are back on the P&R to-do list.

Signed,
Peter Schertz
Andrea Avantaggio

Pioneer Park Neighborhood Meeting

January 6, 2011

Neighbors in attendance: Peter Schertz, Tim Wolf, Molly Mickel, Don Gordon, Marty Adams, Mike Fenton, Bill Bowlby, Robert Lea, Tonya Sakadinsky, Jane Vogt

City staff in attendance: Scott McClain, Ron Moore, Cathy Metz

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Typical tree damage due to mowing and weed-whacking equipment in Pioneer Park:

