



University of Alaska Southeast Auke Lake Shoreline Master Plan

Prepared For:



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University of Alaska Southeast, Auke Lake Shoreline Master Plan

The University Of Alaska Southeast (UAS) benefits from a unique and beautiful setting adjacent to Auke Lake within the City and Borough of Juneau. The campus itself, sits well above the lake level, with views across the lake to nearby mountains and glaciers. For some time, facility planners for the University, faculty, and students have identified the lack of connection between the campus and Auke Lake as a missed opportunity. By most accounts, the campus currently turns its back to the lake. Improved connection would provide added educational, recreation, and social opportunities for students and faculty. UAS and the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) have jointly constructed trail segments, on the east side of the lake, with the goal of constructing a trail around the lake. These improvements have proven very popular with the community and with many students and faculty at UAS. These improvements have helped to spur discussion of how UAS can take better advantage of its lakefront resource.

This master planning effort was initiated to explore options for improving the campus – lake connection. As a starting point, a purpose and need statement was prepared for the project, so that individual components of the plan could be evaluated with respect to how well they support project goals.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of this project is to create a strong connection between Auke Lake and the Juneau campus by improving visual, physical, and educational connections with Auke Lake. The need for this project is to take advantage of the excellent resources Auke Lake offers for educational engagement, cultural knowledge, recreational activities, and marketing opportunities.

Auke Lake sits at the foot of the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) campus. It supports diverse species of fish and wildlife and provides stunning views of southeast Alaska rainforests, Mount McGinnis, Mendenhall Glacier, and the Aurora Borealis. Views of and across Auke Lake are featured in UAS marketing materials.

Currently there is no clear, purposeful connection between the campus and Auke Lake. Current access to the lakeshore is obscure, poorly marked, and awkwardly situated at the backside of campus buildings. Lakeside facilities are sparse (a small dock and an underused gazebo), and are not well suited for Juneau's cold, rainy climate. Buildings, large trees and undergrowth along the shoreline, block views to the Lake. Strengthening the connection to Auke Lake will enhance the natural setting of campus, improve student life, and increase the educational and cultural opportunities for students, staff and the community.

OBJECTIVES

Successful implementation of this plan will:

- Make Auke Lake an integral part of the UAS campus
- Increase the number of locations on campus that students and visitors can view Auke Lake
- Promote appropriate facilities development that provides and enhances views to the lake;
- Increase cultural awareness and recreational opportunities of Auke Lake for UAS students and Juneau residents
- Develop safe and clear connections from the campus core and campus trail system to the lake
- Offer attractive pathways and trails along the UAS shoreline
- Provide lakeside facilities able to support 15-20 students for educational purposes
- Increase the number of lakeside destinations for a wide variety of year-round activities
- Make lake access and facilities comfortable for students during the cold and wet months of the school year

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PLAN IMPROVEMENTS

1. *Eagle Totem Pole Viewpoint and Planting:*

The Eagle Totem Pole is situated in a highly visible and active pedestrian zone of the campus. It currently stands alone in a lawn area adjacent to a steep slope leading down to Auke Lake. This recommendation proposes that the area around the base of the totem be brought to a level grade that would be held in place by a retaining wall. The expanded area around the base would be improved with hard surface, landscape, and seating. In addition, the slope between the totem and the lakeshore would be cleared of trees and tall vegetation to create a strong vista from the totem across the lake to the mountains and glaciers beyond. From this location, the proposed new shelter and dock facility at the lakeside below would be highly visible.

2. *Shelter and Deck:*

The fully enclosed and heated shelter would occupy about 800 square feet. The shelter should be a strong architectural feature, attractive both inside and out, encouraging users to make the short walk from the main campus to the Auke Lake shoreline. The shelter is situated at the bottom of the slope and near lake edge. The surrounding deck and stairs provides access to the lake surface for viewing and recreational uses. The surrounding deck allows visitors to bypass the shelter with little disruption when the shelter is in use for other purposes. The shelter is large enough to support a group of friends enjoying the lake or 15-20 UAS students improving their education. There are several classes that would take advantage of a meeting place on and near the lake for natural sciences, arts, and cultural studies. On-demand heat inside the shelter will make the facility comfortable for students during the cold and wet months of the school year. The shelter would offer an opportunity to get out of the cold or inclement weather while

participating in recreational activities on the lake or offer a quiet get-away for an individual or group to simply relax and watch the Northern Lights in a very unique Alaskan Setting.

3. *North Dock and Boat Slips:*

The dock and shelter area will be visible from the Eagle Totem Pole area, Spikes coffee bar, Egan Library, Egan classrooms and the Lake Side Grill. This high visibility will draw more attention to Auke Lake, helping to make it an integral part of UAS campus. Recreational activities offered at the North Dock could include kayaking, paddle-boarding, or pedal-powered boats. During the cold winter months, when the lake is frozen, the dock will provide access for the lake for skating and cross-country skiing. The North Dock and heated Shelter would be a choice lakeside destination for a wide variety of year-round activities.

4. *Opening Views to Auke Lake:*

Southeast Alaska's rain forest has grown up over the years blocking much of the view of Auke Lake from campus. Previous attempts to open views included limbing-up tall conifers on the lakeside of buildings, which has marginally improving views in some locations. This is considered a detriment by some due to the unnatural look of the trees as a result of the pruning. Although stair and trail construction will result in removal of trees, these improvements may not happen for some time. Selectively thinning the trees is a near-term measure that will increase the number of locations that students and visitors can view Auke Lake. The master plan calls for expanding existing views below the Eagle Totem to create a vista point; additional clearing to improve existing views below the Mourant Building; and selective clearing below the Novatney, Whitehead, Soboleff, and Hendrickson Buildings to improve views from those buildings. The plan also acknowledges the importance of the view from the chapel at the southern edge of campus and for continued maintenance of all views.

5. *Mourant Windows*

A number of architectural modifications have been identified to existing campus buildings that would improve views to the lake and reinforce the lake connection. These include:

- replacing the narrow windows in the Mourant Building with large picture windows or a glass curtain wall
- extending the covered deck to include the Mourant Building, and
- providing small sitting nooks or viewing areas that have large glass windows facing Auke Lake

Renovation or modification to existing buildings should be seen as an opportunity to promote facilities development that provides and enhances views of the lake.

6. *Waterfront Connection Stairway:*

This stairway would provide the most direct route from the upper campus to the lakefront. The Plan recommends a new stairway adjacent to the entry canopy between the Mourant Building and the Novatney building and would be designed to be as inviting as possible to students and visitors. The stairway would be generously wide (8- 12 feet wide) with a canopy to keep it snow-free during the winter months. Below the Mourant building, a second set of covered stairs

provides a direct route down to the lakefront. The stairway and approach should be designed to provide a safe and clear connection from the campus core to Auke Lake.

7. *Waterfront ADA Accessible Link:*

The Master Plan shows a new route meeting the requirements of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) from the campus courtyard down to the Lake Front, north dock, and shelter. This route includes the existing Mourant building (elevator) and a new paved pathway below the Mourant and Novatney buildings. The proposed pathway is shown at 8-feet in width and would be designed with a slope of less than 5%.

8. *Floating Trail*

The benefits of the floating trail can be experienced first-hand by visiting the existing section of floating trail on the East Side of Auke Lake, constructed by the City and Borough of Juneau. The floating trail offers a unique experience, closely connected to the lake. It also offers uninterrupted views across the lake. For this reason, a floating trail connection between the south dock and the north dock has been given priority over a multi-use land-based trail that would be constructed above the lake shoreline. The floating trail is a system of modular floats that are anchored to the bottom of the lake. A boardwalk for some portion of the route may cross low-lying and wet shoreline.

9. *Upland Trail Alternate*

The multi-use path between the two dock areas is identified as an alternative to the floating trail identified above. At some point in the future, it may be desirable to have both. In any case, a pedestrian link from the south dock to the north dock (by the shelter) is an important component of the plan because it allows for direct recreational use of the lakefront below campus. This pedestrian link helps to fulfill the objective of offering attractive pathways and trails along the lakefront. The upland, multi-use trail would be an 8 foot wide asphalt surface with gravel shoulders. Where saturated soils prevent this type of construction, the trail would be constructed as wood plank boardwalk. While a multi-use upland trail may not have the same benefits as the proposed floating trail in terms of experience and views, it may serve a wider range of users and can be more easily maintained during the winter months of the school year.

10. *Relocate the Kiln and Remove Chancellors Parking*

This plan proposes removing the chancellors parking stall and relocation of the existing pottery kiln to the location shown, behind a screening fence. The existing kiln is unsightly and intimidating to pedestrians looking for the access to Auke Lake. The space where the kiln is currently located could be better used as an outdoor gathering space with tables and benches that offers an inviting entry point to the south dock and Auke Lake. As a minimum, the existing kiln should be screened and the chancellors parking stalls repurposed as an entrance to the south dock and Auke Lake.

11. *New Storage Building for Recreational Equipment*

The Plan identifies a new storage building in the vicinity of the South Dock for kayaks, paddle boards, and other aquatic recreational equipment. This location has vehicular access and allows storage of equipment near the location where it will be used. The covered storage building will allow for secure storage of recreational gear.

12. *South Dock Expansion.*

The existing south dock (shown on the plan) allows for recreational access to the lake. It is relatively small and does not accommodate group activities very well. The north dock, below the Eagle Totem Pole, is a plan priority for expanded recreational dock facilities. Improvements to the south dock are considered a lower priority and an improvement that could be pushed out well into the future. The future south dock expansion would double its current size and include slips for launching kayaks and or paddleboards. Improvements at the south dock expansion would also include a new ADA accessible route onto the dock. The university's wastewater lift station is above the south dock. While not particularly attractive, this feature is not necessarily an impediment. Unlike the North Dock, which would act as a visual focal point for the campus, the South Dock is somewhat utilitarian in nature.

CHALLENGES IMPACTING CONSTRUCTION OF PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

Wetland Permitting

While obtaining a wetland permit for the proposed improvements will pose a challenge and it will require some time, experience indicates that it should be possible. Success will hinge on clearly demonstrating that proposed improvements support the purpose and need of the project.

Construction Funding

Construction funding for new projects, within the university system, is highly competitive. It is likely that the proposed Auke Lake connection improvements will be funded in bits and pieces as funding opportunities become available. A schematic level cost estimate has been prepared for the items identified on the master plan. These estimates are based on the schematic level of design in the Plan and limited information on existing conditions. Actual project costs could vary significantly. The estimate is organized to identify costs for individual Plan components that could be constructed independently. The Plan makes no attempt at project phasing because the availability of funding will be unpredictable. Some components of the Plan support larger, community-wide goals, such as extending the trail around Auke Lake for general public use. In cases like this, mixed funding from the Community and the University may be the best way to implement the improvements.

PLAN PRIORITIES

A broader list of program elements was originally included in the Plan and then vetted for desirability. A survey was sent to the advisory group for this plan and the group was asked to rank master plan elements in accordance with how they fulfilled project objectives. Elements that fell particularly low on

that list have been eliminated. These ratings were discussed at a meeting of the advisory group on September 28, 2015 and there was general agreement about the removal of low-rated plan elements.

A second meeting, held on December 10, 2015, with the advisory group again reviewed a possible range of program elements and modified the master plan to better reflect the fiscal realities of implementing the plan. At this meeting it was determined that priority should be focused on:

- strengthening visual connections between the campus and the lake
- strengthening physical connections between the central portion of the campus and the lakefront, and
- providing lakefront facilities that support a variety of uses and activities at the lake.

A next tier of priority would be to develop a lakefront pathway, preferably a floating trail, which would connect the existing south dock area with the proposed improvements at the shelter/north dock. A lesser priority is the expansion of the south dock.

An earlier version of the plan called for an improved trail connection from Sheffield Bridge to the south dock. This trail link has since been dropped from the plan, because there is an existing trail link that leads from the Sheffield Bridge to the main part of campus.

The following table identifies plan components as high, medium, or low priority.

| UAS Auke Lake Shoreline Master Plan, Component Priorities | |
|---|--|
| High Priority | |
| Opening Views to Auke Lake (4) | Opening views to Auke Lake through selective thinning of trees and brush offers the simplest, least expensive, and the most effective way of re-connecting the campus to Auke Lake. |
| Eagle Totem Pole Viewpoint and Planting (1) | Landscape and pedestrian improvements around the Eagle Totem will create a strong Auke Lake viewpoint that helps to visually connect the lake to the campus. |
| Shelter (2) and North Dock (3) Improvements | The proposed shelter and north dock improvements fulfill a number of objectives in meeting the purpose and need for the project. The shelter provides a heated-protected venue for classes and wintertime gatherings. It also provides recreation opportunities and a strong visual link to campus. |
| Waterfront Connection Stairway (6) and ADA Accessible Route (7) to the lake shore | The combination of the proposed stairway and the ADA accessible link provide a safe and clear connection from the campus core to the lake edge. Although there is a current connection, it is difficult to find and not central to the campus. This new stair and pathway is a central component to fulfilling the objective of a strong campus – lake connection. |
| Secure Storage for Recreational Equipment (11) | A new secure storage facility is a high priority because it will simplify keeping and maintaining recreational equipment near the lakefront. |

| High Priority (Continued) | |
|---|---|
| Replace Narrow Windows in the Mourant Building (5) | More UAS Students and Staff visit the Lakeside Grill in the Mourant Building than any other room on campus. However, views and connection to Auke lake are impeded by the narrow foggy windows. Installing larger picture windows or a glass curtain wall will significantly improve the visual connection to Auke Lake |
| Building Improvements that support a stronger connection to Auke Lake | Whenever renovation opportunities arise, look for opportunities for improved views and physical connections to the lakeshore. This can be done by expanding exterior windows, opening key views and by increasing the interior transparency of buildings. Other improvements include extending the covered deck to the Mourant Building and providing small sitting nooks that have large glass windows facing Auke Lake. |
| Medium Priority | |
| Floating Trail (8) | The floating trail provides uninterrupted views of the lake and a more exciting alternative to a paved multi-use trail. The floating trail will offer direct access to the lake. Floating trails are already in use on the east side of the lake and are very popular with local users. |
| Upland Trail Alternative. (9) | The upland trail alternative is considered less desirable than the floating trail, because of the nature of the experience it offers. The upland trail remains in consideration as an alternative to the floating trail if the floating trail proves not to be a viable alternative. At some point, the upland trail could be constructed in addition to the floating trail. |
| Low Priority | |
| South Dock Improvements (12) | The South Dock improvements are identified as a low priority because there is already a dock facility at this location. The proposed improvements will augment and expand recreation opportunities that already exist. The proposed new storage facility will allow easier access to a wider range of recreational equipment for use on the lake. |
| Remove Soboleff Annex Parking (10a) | Removing parking for the Soboleff Annex free up space to create an inviting entrance to Auke Lake with landscaping, tables, benches and a screening fence for the Kiln. |
| Relocate the Kiln (10b) | Relocation of the Kiln is closely related to expanded and improved facilities at the south dock. This particular improvement could be elevated to a medium priority if it is viewed independently of improvements to the south dock |



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