

**Westside Creeks Restoration  
Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting  
November 18, 2008  
6:00 PM**

**Meeting Notes**

Attendees: **Members and Alternates** – Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair; Olga Lizcano, Co-Chair; Gloria Jean Trevino, Avenida Guadalupe NA; Abigail Kinnison, Beacon Hill Neighborhood Association; Greg Brockhouse, Little Flower Basilica; Dr. Catherine Rainwater, Our Lady of the Lake University; Barbara Witte-Howell, San Antonio Conservation Society; Thomas Lopez, San Antonio Independent School District; Abel Ramirez, San Antonio Wheelman; Dr. Jose Jimenez, The University of Texas at San Antonio; Erwin DeLuna, United San Antonio Pow Wow, Inc.; Ashley Hernandez, Woodlawn Lake NA, Ted Ozuna, Donaldson Terrace NA; and Jason Mata, Prospect Hill NA. **Staff and Consultants** – Suzanne Scott, SARA; Roberto Rodriguez, SARA Board; Nasario Perez, SARA Board, Rudy Farias, SARA; Gloria Rodriguez, SARA; Jim Boenig, SARA; Ed Garza, AECOM; Erika Resendiz, RJ Rivera Associates, Inc.; Linda Alvarado-Vela, RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc.; and Rudy Rivera, PE, RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc. **Members of the Public** – Henry Rodriguez, Representing LULAC and Councilwoman Lourdes Galvan; Michael Montoya; George Martinez; Pam Martinez, WLCA; Barbara Hill.

**I. Welcome & Introductions**

The meeting was called to order by Robert Ramirez, Co-Chair of the WCROC. He introduced Roberto Rodriguez with the San Antonio River Authority Board of Directors who then gave a welcome to the group. He expressed his happiness at the Westside Creeks Restoration Project getting off the ground. He also told the committee he was very grateful to be there with all of the oversight committee members.

Mr. Ramirez and Olga Lizcano, Oversight Committee Co-chairs, then introduced themselves and welcomed the group. Mr. Ramirez said the consultant team had been hard at work with SARA negotiating the contract and that they are really close to having an executed contract.

Mr. Rodriguez then introduced several other members of the audience including Dan Ramos a veteran, Hendry Rodriguez representing Councilwoman Lourdes Galvan, Nasario Perez with the SARA Board, and SARA staff members in attendance.

**II. Presentation of Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Ramirez then informed the committee that SARA staff would be sending meeting minutes out ahead of the meetings so committee members could review and approve them. He said the minutes would be sent out and comments presented at the following meeting. If there are no comments or objections, the committee will approve the minutes. Erika Resendiz, with RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc., then said that last meeting minutes were included in the committee's packet and could be approved at the next meeting along with the November minutes.

Barbara Witte Howell Hill, the oversight committee member representative from the San Antonio Conversation Society, then requested that a sheet be passed around so that committee members

had the opportunity to provide their correct email address. She wanted to do this to ensure everyone got the meeting minutes. The sign-in sheet was then passed around to the committee.

### **III. Project Scope Overview**

Mr. Ramirez then introduced Ed Garza, project manager with AECOM, for an overview of the conceptual design phase and asked committee members to hold their questions as this was meant to be a quick presentation of the consultant team's scope. Mr. Garza began by saying the consultant team is excited about helping develop the vision for the Westside Creeks Restoration Project and is looking forward to getting the oversight committee and the local community involved in the process. Mr. Garza said he would provide a project scope and overview and that Ms. Resendiz would review the public involvement timeline in greater detail. These items would then be followed by a branding and key messaging workshop.

Mr. Garza said the consultant team first looked at the historical context of the importance of this project. He said the creeks have played an important role in the history of San Antonio particularly because of their use to reduce flooding in the downtown area.

He said the consultant team felt this project really needed to capture the vision the community has for the creeks and they tried to capture this through the theme – reflect, imagine, revitalize, empower.

He then reviewed the goals that have been identified by the study team and said that there are a number of goals depending on the creek but when you look at the creeks as a whole all of the goals are attainable. These are the goals the consultant team is putting in the framework and will guide the visioning process.

Mr. Garza said the consultant team is also aware of the challenges that will need to be overcome. These include issues with public safety, lack of private investment, health issues, and the fact that it is not just the building of trails but also making the connections to other needs in the community. He again said this must be accomplished without forgetting the flood control functions the creeks provide.

Mr. Garza then went on to discuss some of the groups already doing work along each of the creeks and opportunities to partner with these organizations. He also provided images to illustrate what the creeks look like now and what they could look like for each of the four creeks.

Mr. Garza then introduced the firms that make up the consultant team. They include TCB, EDRAW, RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc., Inter-fluve, and Preservation Matters. He also introduced key team members who would work closely with the oversight committee including Mr. Garza the project manager, Ms. Resendiz and Linda Alvarado-Vela who would assist with public involvement, Andy Rooke who would assist with Hydraulics and Hydrology and Environmental services.

Mr. Garza said there are a number of different tasks associated with this project. Task 1 Public Involvement is an important task and spans all 19 months. It runs throughout the entire length of the project. He said Ms. Resendiz would talk more about this task during the next agenda item.

Task 2 deals with existing conditions and analyzing the opportunities and the constraints currently along each of the creeks. Mr. Garza said that during this task the consultant team will be looking at what the challenges are not just for the creek but for the area within walking distance of the creek. He said this task would provide the content for the first presentation to the public and is where the consultant team is at today.

He said the first public work session will look at a presentation of existing conditions, trends and issues, and a visioning exercise developed to collect “big ideas” from community stakeholders. He said this would be conducted in break out sessions with the understanding that all ideas are good ideas. From this, he said the consultant team would start to develop a vision of what the community would like to see along each of the creeks.

Mr. Garza then presented Task 3 which includes the development of preliminary concept alternatives and all the analysis that will be utilized to compare the concept alternatives including preliminary engineering and environmental analysis. He said this is a very thorough process and will occur over several months. He said the consultant team will then start putting concepts on paper so at the second workshop they can present work accomplished to-date, the concept alternatives and key planning issues. The second public work session would revolve around break out design groups facilitated by members of the consultant team to work towards a consensus on a preferred concept.

Mr. Garza said Task 4 would occur after the second public work session. This task would include the refinement of the concepts based on areas of concerns identified at second public work session. He said this task would also start to identify which concepts are most feasible.

He then went on to present Task 5. He said this task would refine the concepts into a vision and would begin with report development process to include the development of accompanying graphics.

Mr. Garza then covered Task 6 – implementation. He said this is an important task because it is important that the San Antonio River Authority show immediate success as well as long-term success through a phased approach. This task will provide the content for the third public work session. At this work session, Mr. Garza said participants would be able to move about various stations to gain information about input and feedback received throughout the process including the “big ideas” that guide policy and action, potential catalyst projects, and various funding options.

Mr. Garza said this would most likely consist of an all day open house where the consultant team will have staff available throughout the day to collect public feedback. He said the consultant team would propose a final presentation in the evening to cap off the event.

Mr. Garza then concluded the scope overview and asked for any questions the committee might have. Following are the questions and responses collected during this point of the meeting.

- Abigail Kinnison with Beacon Hill Neighborhood Association made an observation regarding the goals. She said she did not see a specific goal regarding transportation specifically. She said that a lot of times hike and bike trails are thought of as recreation but they are not looked at as part of the system of transportation. She requested that the

consultant team consider adding transportation goal. Mr. Garza agreed with her observation and said that many of the details behind each of these goals include transportation considerations and that this would definitely be part of the consultant team's analysis.

- Ms. Kinnison also said that perhaps in some areas the consultant team may want to look at biking distances for constraints and opportunities and not just walking distance. Mr. Garza accepted this comment as well.
- Ms. Witte Howell then asked that Mr. Garza elaborate on the acronyms for the consultant team. Mr. Garza then reviewed the consultant team member firms.

#### **IV. Public Involvement Plan**

Mr. Garza then introduced Ms. Resendiz who went over the public involvement plan, how the consultant team plans to get the word out, and what the role of the committee will be throughout the process. Ms. Resendiz started by thanking the committee for their attendance and participation. She said she has been so excited about this project and as looking forward to working with the oversight committee and the local community. She also encouraged oversight committee members to attend the meetings and reminded them that they are ambassadors for this process to the community.

Ms. Resendiz started off by saying that the document presented to the oversight committee is a draft public involvement plan outline which will be continuously revisited and revised as the process moves forward. She said the committee would be participating in a short key messaging and branding workshop as part of today's agenda which is one of the first steps in the public involvement plan. Ms. Resendiz said the input from this workshop will help the consultant team develop the brand and key messages which will then be carried out into the community. This will include a logo to help the community automatically identify materials and meetings related to the Westside Creeks Restoration Project.

Ms. Resendiz then presented the rest of the public involvement plan outline. She stated that at the next meeting the consultant team would be presenting the branding materials for feedback from the community and that the following meeting would focus on the upcoming press conference and first public work session.

Ms. Resendiz said that the three work sessions are a primary focal point of the public involvement plan outline and that the public involvement activities would either be working towards the workshop in terms of placing advertisements and conducting outreach or compiling data after the work sessions and presenting these reports to the oversight committee for their review.

She said that as far as input, it is very important to involve people from a diverse group of organizations. For this reason, she said the consultant team will be looking for the oversight committee to help get the word out prior to each of the work session and then as facilitators at the work sessions themselves.

Ms. Resendiz then asked the oversight committee to review a list of possible venues for the committee's input/feedback. She said these venues were selected because they are, for the most part, centrally located to all of the creeks. She then asked if anyone had any preferences

regarding these venues or if they had any other venues to suggest. Some of the comments included the following:

- The Buena Vista Theater at UTSA Downtown has built in audio/visual equipment where as the Southwest Room does not.
- Add MAUC and the Bazan Library as possible meeting locations.
- Add the VIA Metropolitan Center on San Pedro as a possible meeting location.
- Parking is limited at the Progreso Theatre. The parking is located in back.

Ms. Alvarado-Vela then informed the committee that she had been in discussions with Gloria Jean Treviño from the Avenida Guadalupe Association and oversight committee member about the possible use of the Progreso Theatre for the first workshop. Ms. Treviño stated she would be happy to offer the use of the facility and would be willing to waive the fees. Ms. Alvarado-Vela offered the suggestion that perhaps in the interest of time, the committee could elect to support this venue for the first workshop and that other locations could be considered for future workshops. Mr. Ramirez offered this as a motion to the committee and the motion was approved.

The committee was then asked by Ms. Resendiz to rank their top five meeting locations and to email them to her at [resendiz@rjrivera.com](mailto:resendiz@rjrivera.com) prior to the next committee meeting.

Ms. Ms. Witte Howell then asked if the consultant team would be able to implement the public involvement plan both bi-culturally and bilingually. She was specifically concerned that work session materials would be translated to Spanish and that Spanish facilitators would be on hand to properly greet people at the work sessions. Ms. Resendiz assured her that the consultant team had several team members who are fully bilingual and that they are prepared to translate materials as needed for the public work sessions. She also said that meeting outreach materials would have contact information for individuals with other special needs to call prior to the work sessions to ensure they are adequately accommodated. These could include requests for sign-language interpretation or translations into other languages.

Jason Mata with Prospect Hill Neighborhood Association then asked why the committee was not being given the opportunity to select the other two work session locations. Mr. Ramirez said there was not enough time to go through all of them now because of the Branding & Key Messaging Workshop. He said that feedback could be provided to Ms. Resendiz via email and then further discussion could occur as those work sessions came closer.

Ms. Resendiz then wrapped up by asking the committee members to fill out the Public Involvement Questionnaires in their packets. This questionnaire was meant to identify the various outreach opportunities offered by the organizations represented on the oversight committee. She asked oversight committee members to fill these out and email them to her prior to the next meeting or to bring them to the next oversight committee meeting.

#### **V. Branding & Key Messaging Workshop**

Ms. Resendiz then pointed out that the committee was provided a preliminary public involvement plan and action plan for executing a series of workshops. She said these were provided so the committee will have a general idea of how the consultant team plans to solicit public participation in the Westside Creeks visioning process.

She then led the committee through a series of questions. First, Ms. Resendiz helped the committee define success. She asked that the oversight committee to imagine that they are in this exact same room at the final oversight committee meeting and commenting on how successful the visioning process was and how excited you are to move forward with the plan recommendations. She asked the committee to tell her what needs to happen in order for you to experience this feeling of success by completing this sentence: "The Westside Creeks visioning process was a huge success because..."

Following are the responses collected during this portion of the meeting.

- Cooperation
- Maximum participation from the community
- Recognition, understanding of the Westside - bringing back the community and reintroducing it so the community is reintroduced as a result of the process
- I feel like not just that the committee celebrates but the whole Westside celebrates
- Good command of the historical value of that particular community
- Strong communication and understanding by all, not just people who live in the Westside but the entire city
- This has got to be a model for the entire city
- Want to make sure that the creeks themselves are biologically sound and that we make it environmentally sustainable
- Would like to incorporate the existing resources that have been developed for instance the studies on sustainable waterways – don't spend time and money reinventing things that are already available and already approved by the river authority
- I would like to see that something for every age group is incorporated into the design
- Has to be completely people friendly
- I would like to feel that it was a win-win for everyone and that everyone's investment was a good investment
- Results
- I would like it to see visionary enough or forward enough that it doesn't have to be redone in 20 years
- Would add that there is a plan to maintain it once you implement it
- An ownership by people a sense of pride so that they actually do want to be a part of helping to maintain that
- Make sure everybody knows there was four creeks involved – that we are not just working on one area but on several areas – this is not the only area that needs help in San Antonio
- I also think there are incredible architectural resources in these areas that could somehow be incorporated.
- Making connections throughout to architect, culture, etc.
- The historical significance
- We are having a big party by a creek and we look at each other and it is unique – becomes a point of jealousy to other communities – you can see there are generations at the party – a creek that looks like nothing else in the city – this is the rebirth of the community
- I think it would be good if we could incorporate local talent – open to continued improvement by allowing mural groups to put
- Economic generators have been identified for development of the project

- To have youth involvement – that the youth had a say in the project too – personally would like to see beauty brought out not only in the culture but also in the environment.

Ms. Resendiz then asked the committee to comment on the obstacles or challenges that could keep SARA from being successful. Following are the responses collected.

- Funding – where is the money coming from
- Need to make sure that the community identifies what we are doing as a goal not what is going to happen in next 18 months – make sure they understand what the goal is of this phase not what it is going to be – they need to understand what we are trying to envision
- It has to be realistic too – it's going to be a workable plan that can get funded – not things that are unrealistic
- Overcoming the fear and anxiety people have regarding the creeks – it is wild and dangerous as a teenager
- As a young person people used to think it was dangerous – I didn't think it was dangerous but people said they were dangerous
- Need to ensure that whatever goals or end result is that it is communicated properly to the community – need to sell to community on vision it is only great if community uses it
- How do you convince them to take part in an active urban community? Need to believe in their community again.
- A deep community buy-in, that they set the goals and that they will be comfortable in terms of using them
- Changing human habits – I live on a section of Martinez Creek that is used as a dump site – dead and live animals, residual trash during flooding from IH 10 and beyond.
- Maintenance
- I think to overcoming apathy – the best way is to show others that you do really care about them – make sure their comments and input are incorporated – it is not going to be an easy thing have to show that we care number one
- Another challenge is cultural – the apathy, a grew up in area and there is some real history along those creeks that we would like to remember
- La Llorona
- Communication – we have to consistently communicate what we are doing
- Financing???
- I don't think a lot of it is apathy I think a lot of it is the real perception that there is a funding gap – need to do some modeling where we bring in elected officials – there is a difference between apathy and frustration – need to dissipate some of that difference
- It can't be an us them kind of thing – we have to be working together
- Who is going to be the enforcer – explaining how its going to be enforced – safety and coding
- Who actually governs that system – we have to go out and use what we say we want the people to use
- Linear creeks board – we have talked about security extensively, they have a rule in the city that 1.5 or 1.8 miles where they have committed to provide one park ranger to provide this type of security which would alleviate some of the concerns of people in the neighborhood. As we get an influx of people coming to the Westside area it is

going to help in the development. In late 40s and 50s there was a lot of gang activity along the creeks. As these areas are developed security is going to be provided.

- There is prostitution, mattresses, drugs, syringes, etc along the creeks now.
- There are a lot of positives as well – they go in and scrub the creeks down – we need to begin to celebrate the positives – also need to educate people that it takes money to do these things.
- Changing the negative and definition and culture of the Westside – if I told my friends we were doing this they would be surprised that the Westside would be considered for this.
- Scraping the edge of the creeks is not the best idea, there has to be a balance if you are going to make these things sustainable.
- Greedy ones that come and want to take over everything

After identifying the challenges, Ms. Resendiz asked the committee to list the opportunities for reaching success. Following were their responses.

- Economic development people will want to build next to a nice clean creek
- That goes back to providing linkages to facilities that are in close proximity like Our Lady of the Lake
- Flats and condos are the in thing and they would want to come so people could come and enjoy
- You have to make people want to face in rather than face out – right now it is something you don't want to face
- Destination –
- Eco-friendly
- More security
- There is like a flood of activity that is occurring – there are opportunities to connect to St. Mary's revitalization task force – received a huge grant to act as a human one stop destination – Westside development corporation -- city manager is looking to focus inside loop 410 there is going to be a big reinvestment – there is going to be a movement to move back to the center of the city and it could be an opportunity for us to engage
- Avenida Guadalupe also received a federal grant to build some new office space – space near Avenida is going to look real different
- Our Lady of the Lake is developing a master plan and rebuilding and we are right there
- Is there anything underway to have a Westside master plan?
- If nice creeks are economic magnets, it seems we ought to have a larger master plan so that they come together at some point
- We are also at a crucial point with 4 council people – they are looking for signature projects – perhaps we can get them on our side –
- Use council people mailing lists to advertise for public meeting
- There was wildlife in those creeks that didn't exist any where else and now it is all gone – perhaps we can bring some of that back – what was there – it is ecologically important to our city – we don't want it to look like a Disneyland unfortunately the SA River is starting to look like that
- Recreation –
- Make connections to transportation networks
- There are also two very important things – on north we have Woodlawn Lake and Elmendorf Lake on south there will be some revitalization in 2009 and also the veterans group under the leadership of ms. Galvan will be erecting a giant statue in recognition of



all the veterans – the other thing that is happening is the linear creeks board – looking for Westside creeks to be included in next city’s bond election

- There is a particular tiff or TIRZ district that is coming and he talked about incorporating la basilica – those types of things could be funded by a tiff. It just so happens that could be considered for district 5 in next 60-90 days – and they are looking for projects they can implement now - could be in place immediately
- A strategic coordination of various agencies
- These lanes are not like the bike lanes - bike lanes don’t allow pedestrians - no they will be multiple use trails
- This is an opportunity to convert what is already there into something better – this is the best opportunity to do that

Ms. Resendiz then asked the oversight committee to identify stakeholders that need to be involved in the process. Following are those identified by the committee which will be added to the public involvement plan.

- All stakeholders
- Corporate America
- Small businesses
- Residents
- All the user groups – pedestrians, cyclists, kids, old people, disabled
- Military
- Institutions –educational
- Non-profits
- Youth groups
- Local artists
- CityYear
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- High schools in the areas – schools
- Churches politicians
- Senior citizen groups
- Neighborhood associations
- Salado Creek Foundation – Charles Barley
- Parks foundation

During the final portion of the Branding & Key Messaging Workshop, Ms. Resendiz asked the group to identify what information the consultant team would want to know from these stakeholders and what information those stakeholders would need to know from the consultant team. Their responses are listed below under the appropriate heading.

What do we want to know from them?

- Their ideas – what they want in the back yards/front yards
- Their money
- Historical information – their history
- Practical things – every day things that people live with and deal with
- Want to tap into their resources their contacts
- What is the neighborhood going to be like - need new ideas
- Advertising need their help getting the word out
- If we understand their long-range goals it helps us to plan our long range goals

- I would like to know what motivates them – what creates an emotional bond between them and the idea of the creeks.

What do they need to know from us?

- What makes us tick
- A clear, concise vision of what this is and how it is going to benefit their groups
- What the limitations are of what we are doing
- That we are inclusive in what we are doing
- That this will become a catalyst for different things – they need to know our needs and aspirations of what we want to get out of this
- That this project will be followed through to completion
- That we are serious about it
- That this is a city-wide and county-wide project – we want people from other parts of town to be involved – need input from other parts of city
- Funding sources which they already know and their political influence – once the creeks are developed they are going to come from all parts of town
- Educate the public on ecological impact – the birds will come back if you restore the creek – they are already coming back and I look at them with sadness when I see them picking at concrete not at the craw dads that used to be there
- They need to know that we appreciate the diversity – or restoring the diversity to the creek – it shouldn't be looked at as solely an economic venture
- The people need to be educated because these places used to be used for illegal dumping – as they are catching these people there are stiff fines being imposed on this
- Will the development accommodate what the flood control channel did before – need to be able to communicate this to the public – don't want to dig up flooding issues
- There are some community gardens are doing the type of gardens that use curative
- Perhaps we can have 10-15 retention ponds
- They need to know about security
- Don't want to set up people to false expectations
- I totally know that but if you get people involved and you ask them what they want but you find out that public works won't let that happen then we don't want them set them up for failure
- Don't forget political dimension – people get promised things and then they were not developed

Ms. Resendiz concluded the workshop by thanking the oversight committee for the input and assuring them that this information would be incorporated in the branding materials to be presented at the next committee meeting in December.

## **VI. Points of Contact**

Mr. Ramirez then went over the points of contact for the oversight committee. He said there are essentially three entities working on this project – SARA, the consultant team, and the oversight committee. He informed the committee that as the SARA project manager, Rudy Farias would serve as the single point of contact for SARA. Similarly, Mr. Garza would be the point of contact for the consultant team. The purpose of this is to ensure that both project managers are kept informed regarding all issues. Within the committee, Mr. Ramirez encouraged the free flow of

information and he welcomed committee members to contact each other and discuss issues freely.

## **VII. Other Issues**

After all of the agenda items were covered, Mr. Ramirez covered the next meeting date and time as well as other issues. He asked the committee if there were any objections with holding the next meeting on December 9, the second Tuesday in December. He said this meeting would most likely double as a holiday party. No one voiced any objections and the next meeting was scheduled as discussed.

Next, Mr. Ramirez talked about attendance. He said Gloria Rodriguez is working very hard to secure committee members and alternates for all of the organizations targeted to participate in the oversight committee. He encouraged everyone to nominate an alternate who would serve on the committee should they not be able to attend.

He also informed the committee that the consultant team would be preparing notebooks for everyone that would include a committee and a consultant roster as well as tabs for them to organize their monthly handouts. He said the notebooks would be coming soon and he asked that everyone be patient as the project gets off the ground and builds momentum.

One of the committee members then asked what the official name of the committee was because it was stated differently in different places. Mr. Ramirez stated that it is the Westside Creeks ROC which stands for the Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee.

After this, no further business was discussed and the meeting was adjourned by Mr. Ramirez at 8:00 p.m.

## **Attachments**

- Sign-in Sheets
- AECOM PowerPoint Presentation

## **Distribution**

- Westside Creeks ROC
- SARA Staff
- Consultant Team