



Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting April 19, 2011 – 6:00 PM

Meeting Notes

Attendees:

Members and Alternates – Robert Ramirez (WCROC Co-Chair), Olga Lizcano (WCROC Co-Chair), Abigail Kinnison (Beacon Hill N.A.), Rod Radle (San Antonio Alternative Housing Association), Abel Ramirez (San Antonio Wheelmen), Dr. Catherine Rainwater (Our Lady of the Lake University), Santiago Garcia Jr. (Westside Development Corporation), Theodore Ozuna (Donaldson Terrace N.A.), Joanne Walsh (Downtown Residents Association), Dr. Jude Valdez (UTSA), Erwin De Luna (United San Antonio Pow Wow, Inc.), Barbara Hall (San Antonio Conservation Society), Joanne Walsh (Downtown Residents Association), and Ray Flores (Westside Development Corporation).

Staff and Consultants – Suzanne Scott (SARA General Manager), Jim Boenig (SARA), Steve Graham (SARA), Rudy Farias (SARA), Gloria Rodriguez (SARA), Bruce Cole (SARA), Brandon Ross (City of San Antonio), Frances Gonzalez (City of San Antonio – Mayor’s Office), Diana Hidalgo (City of San Antonio – Office of Cultural Affairs), Andy Rooke (AECOM), Jeremy Hanzlik (AECOM), David Parkhill (AECOM), Rudy Rivera (RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc.), Linda Vela (RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc.), and William Long (RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc.).

Members of the Public – Steven Evans (Linda Pace Foundation), Narcisco Cano (San Pedro Creek Subcommittee Chair), Dwayne Bohuslav, Timothy Hayes, Jose Gonzalez (San Antonio Alternative Housing), Robert Rodriguez, Jr. (SSCOT), Henrietta Lagrange (LULAC), Edith McAllister, Graciela Sanchez (Esperanza Peace & Justice Center), Julio Gonzalez, Jason Nelson, Jesse L. Lara, GB Schulz, Caleb Etheredge, and Kizzie Sanders, John Butchkosky (Texas Alliance for Human Needs), Todd Simmang (Jacobs), Susan Schleicher (Our Lady of the Lake), Eduardo Garza, Andrew Perez (UTSA), Cosima Colvin (Beacon Hill N.A.), and Dr. Garri Dryde.

I. Welcome & Introductions

Olga Lizcano called the meeting to order. She said it had been a long break but the committee had a lot to cover. Robert Ramirez then identified Edith McAllister a member of the San Antonio Parks Foundation and welcomed her to the meeting. He asked those who were new to the meeting to introduce themselves. Eduardo Cavazos Garza, the founder and director of the Jazz Poets Society, introduced himself as a longtime resident of the Westside. He said he was glad to be at the meeting to witness the plan. Steven Evans, Director and Curator for the Linda Pace Foundation, introduced himself as well and said the Pace Foundation has a campus next to San Pedro Creek.

Mr. Ramirez then asked Roberto Rodriguez, SARA Board Member, to say a few words. Mr. Rodriguez said the group was gathered to help get the creeks back to their natural state. He extended a very special welcome to everyone in attendance and to the WCROC. He welcomed everyone to the heart of the Westside – the Westside Creeks.

II. Approval of the Meeting Minutes (August 2010)

Ms. Lizcano then called for approval of the August 2010 meeting minutes. Erwin De Luna moved to accept the minutes as submitted and Ray Flores seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

III. Presentation of Draft Report

Mr. Ramirez said that even though the committee had not met recently, much work has been ongoing by the consultant team. He introduced Andy Rooke with AECOM and asked him to present the final plan. He also asked that questions be held until the end of the presentation.

Mr. Rooke began the presentation with historical photographs illustrating the creeks' importance to the community. He said that despite their importance the creeks also had flood-related issues that were significant in nature. He said in the 1950s the US Army Corps of Engineers engaged in a Channel Improvement project along the creeks that reduced flooding as well as the ecological characteristics. He said that in trying to reduce the risk for flooding they caused other issues and impacted the community's cohesiveness and connectivity.

Mr. Rooke reiterated the Westside Creeks Restoration Project is a community led effort. He said many stakeholder meetings were held with people in the community including potential funding partners such as SARA, COSA, the County, and have all provided input. The purpose of this effort is to develop concepts for restoring the creeks, maintain or enhance the flood control aspects, and provide enhanced opportunities for urban recreation.

Mr. Rooke said numerous public meetings and workshops were held to develop concepts for each of the creeks. He then showed existing creek condition photographs. He pointed out the limited aquatic life and limited base flow. He said the primary purpose of the US Army Corp of Engineers project in the 1950s and 60s was to eliminate flooding along the Westside Creeks but that recent DFIRM maps show flooding is still an issue along many segments of the Westside Creeks.

Mr. Rooke said that other problems caused by the channelization are that it divided neighborhoods. He said that there are also places where businesses turned their backs to the creek and the idea behind the concepts is to restore connections to neighborhoods and businesses.

Mr. Rooke then reviewed the project goals. He said the first goal was to restore the creeks. He said that all of the designs considered needed to incorporate a stable stream design. He said they want to create a balance between sediment transport and bank stability. He said they are trying to achieve a balance. The second goal was to add vegetation back into the creeks. He said this is best accomplished by understanding that these channels do need to carry flood flows and that vegetation can slow down the

flow of water. For this reason, vegetation was scaled appropriately with small vegetation growing close to the water and getting larger further away.

Mr. Rooke said new engineering models show there is still significant flooding risks along segments of these creeks. He said this could actually be an opportunity as it would allow SARA to work with flood mitigation projects so that restoration works hand in hand with flood mitigation or buyout programs. He showed an exhibit which highlighted structures in the 10 year, 50 year, and 100 year floodplain.

Mr. Rooke said the team also looked at the connectivity of the creeks. He said there was an opportunity to work with the Linear Creeks Advisory Board. He pointed out that the recently passed Proposition 2 specifically named the Westside Creeks and is a funding source.

Mr. Rooke then said that his team, with public input, developed the economic catalyst sites. He explained that these were areas along creek segments that could serve as a catalyst for economic growth in the community. He said that each of these sites was developed in coordination with the oversight committee and the subcommittees. He reminded the audience that the project that is currently proposed only calls for the restoration of the creeks themselves and that any development that occurs is secondary to restoration effort.

Mr. Rooke discussed two types of restoration, Type A and Type B. Type A is working within the existing ROW limits which allows for minimal restoration, stream modifications, and flood mitigation, with full trails. Type B restoration calls for an expanded ROW which creates opportunities for more significant restoration including stream modifications with enhanced ecological restoration and flood mitigation, and full trails. He showed cross sections illustrating Type A and B restorations for each creek.

Mr. Rooke talked about other opportunities such as providing better connectivity to a proposed VIA Bus Rapid Transit station near Martinez Creek at Fredericksburg Road and opportunities to address security concerns mentioned during the early part of this project by bringing more eyes to the creek. He said the biggest thing would be leveraging the Westside Creeks Restoration Project with other projects going on in the area such as the Our Lady of the Lake master plan and the dredging project on Elmendorf Lake.

Mr. Rooke then went on to explain how they developed the phasing. He said the study team developed a priority ranking for each of the creeks according to restoration, water, connections, security, and leveraging. He said using these rankings the study team came up with a realistic order for how these projects can be implemented. He said the rankings are dynamic and as planning, design, and construction progresses priorities may change.

Mr. Rooke then discussed the projects phasing and cost estimates. The initial Phase 1 is estimated at \$300 million. Phase 1 includes some improvements along all of the creeks including trails along the entire creek system. He said that from this, they pulled out a group of pilot projects from each of the creeks. These pilot projects were estimated at \$60 million and identified as Phase 1A. Phase 1A projects allowed for improved flood control were applicable, restoring the environment, creating trails and establishing connections. He said the recommendation is to have physical pilot projects along Apache Reach 1, Alázan

Reach 1, and Martinez Reach 5. He further said there would be a planning opportunity on San Pedro Reach 2.

Mr. Rooke said that the study team was seeking comments on this approach so they could be incorporated into the final report. He said the committee would be allowed a two week comment period to do so. He then outlined the following action items and the project timeline:

- Action item 1 – continue community support for the project
- Action item 2 – develop public agency funding and partnership agreements
- Action item 3 – implementation of phase 1A projects
- Action item 4 – develop cooperating governmental and private agreements
- Action item 5 – develop revised planning details for remaining phase 1 projects
- Action item 6 – completion of remaining phase 1 recommended projects

Questions & Comments:

- Where can people get copy of report? The draft report is online and we have printed copies available for folks who are not able to download the electronic copy.
- I noticed that year 2000 census data was used. Is there any way to use 2010 census data? We can look at that.
- Barbara Hall (San Antonio Conservation Society) - It is clear and concise. We are very pleased with it.
- Abigail Kinnison
 - Need to reference the census tracts by number on page 25? In upper left-hand corner.
 - We need to add transit routes on page 27-37.
 - Want to label the public agency as to which public agency owns which property along the creek. Maybe not every single parcel but certainly the larger ones.
 - In one section there is a mention of other initiatives. We need to mention the Mayor's SA2020 initiative.
 - I think it looks great and you all have done a good job.
- Santiago Garcia (Westside Development Corporation) – It was much easier to read and a friendlier draft than what we saw last time. This is much more streamlined and easier to use and flip through.
- Erwin De Luna (United San Antonio Pow Wow, Inc.)
 - I do like the map and the reference to see what section we are looking at and we may want to call it an "inset".
 - Also, you made a comment of establishing ownership of the creeks. We should be able to say what agencies have responsibility to help out on certain reaches. To this, Mr. Rooke responded that the study team has still not broken out the division of responsibilities and that it would be part of detailed design.
- Joanne Walsh (Downtown Residents Association)
 - Is there a Type B restoration on San Pedro Creek? Mr. Rooke responded that there is.

- She said that it was not clear of that from what was presented. Mr. Rooke said there is a Type B project which is part of San Pedro Reach 4 in the arts district and that is one of the areas that does not appear quite ready for action yet and will be deferred to following phases.
 - Does that mean that there will be a Phase 2? If so, can that be clarified at the beginning of the report? Mr. Farias said that Phase 1 is the \$300 million. He said what is not clear is what Reaches would be in Phases 1B and 1C.
 - On the page where you had the cost, the report that was online does not have those right hand two columns.
- Jude Valdez (University of Texas at San Antonio) – I want to ditto the remarks about Phase 1. If you say there is a Phase 1, then logically there has to be a Phase 2. It just seems illogical and that needs to be clarified.
 - Abel Ramirez (San Antonio Wheelman) – I think you did a very good job and I do not have comments at this time.
 - Rod Radle (San Antonio Alternative Housing) – I appreciate that you prioritized projects on a collective basis. We all want to see something in our backyard so I appreciate that you will be doing that. I want to applaud you on the project ranking.
 - Ted Ozuna (Donaldson Terrace NA) – I like the phasing and timeframe for each individual creek. It is very logical to do it as funds become available rather than have to wait for the whole thing. I like that it will be a continuous effort.
 - Catherine Rainwater (Our Lady of the Lake University) – I do not have any comments. I think it is really nicely done.
 - Ray Flores (Westside Development Corporation) – I just have a quick question on budget. This is really a construction budget and does not include maintenance. Who would be responsible for maintaining the 13 miles of trails? Mr. Rooke said some of the operations and maintenance costs are in the appendix. Mr. Radle added that the City of San Antonio Parks & Recreation Department is currently maintaining the trail developed by San Antonio Alternative Housing.
 - Mr. Radle asked if the costs include acquisition costs. Mr. Rooke responded that it did include it and that in some reaches it is a significant percentage of the costs. What about the cost of the catalyst sites? Those are not part of this project but will be opportunities.
 - Mr. De Luna said partnering with other improvements might translate into savings for these projects (leveraging).
 - Mr. Rodriguez said that the \$60 million includes constructing 13 miles of trails. He wanted to know how they were coordinating with Proposition 2 funding. Mr. Farias said the details of the funding still have to be worked out. He said SARA has been in close coordination with the City and that the project area includes 14 miles of trails in total but that 1 mile is already completed (San Antonio Alternative Housing Trail).
 - Mr. Rooke said that San Pedro Creek trails through downtown will need to come in at later time because ROW is limited and this still has to be further studied. He said there is enough property on Alázan, Apache and Martinez for the trails. Is that on both sides of the creeks or is that one side? Mr.

Rooke said that the general concept was to have trails on both sides but in some areas where it is not needed they are only on one side.

- Mr. Garcia asked what the study team had in mind when they talked about leveraging. Mr. Rooke said that there are other master plans going on and that some of the existing projects have identified interests and possibly funding for the Westside Creeks. He said SARA would like to build off of other projects that are under development.
- Henrietta LaGrange said she was glad this is coming forth. She said her concerns have to do with land acquisition. She asked if SARA has already purchased the land or if the people who owned the properties would be surprised. She asked that SARA pay them a higher than fair price. Mr. Rooke said that no land acquisition had occurred. Ms. LaGrange said she was also concerned regarding the maintenance. She said she lives right across from Alázan and she said the contracted maintenance staff does not do a good job. She asked if the study team knew where they would start first. Mr. Rooke said they would start on three of the reaches concurrently. She said that SARA needed to get input from the community as to who is going to be doing the maintenance. She said the City hires laborers and they are not trained properly. She said they need to get to know the vegetation that is growing there and how to take care of it.
- Julio Gonzalez - I would highly recommend that you acquire the properties you need now rather than later. Otherwise, you are working with the citizens and in time it will cost you more. If you beautify some area of the creek, you need to buy all the land first otherwise the improvements you make will increase the cost of properties. I am surprised you have gotten this far and that you have not contacted property owners. I own an acre and no one has contacted me. How can you name a cost to something I own? Secondly, you mention that in all phases, trails come first. On page 9 you have a picture of trails. You identify it 10 feet wide with gravel on each side. I would recommend that if its going to be 10 feet wide that you designate 4 feet for bikes to avoid interference with pedestrians. Also, put elevated strips to separate bikes from people. I am a person that has travelled all over. I can tell you that trails are fine but not if you are going to be mixing modes. My land is where the City decided to bisect my land and put in New Padre Drive.
- My name is Graciela Sanchez and I am with the Westside Preservation Group and the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center.
 - In the 7th grade, we used to use the creek to do all our biology. It was the perfect place for science.
 - When I look at the Alázan Plaza, how does Tafolla get incorporated into this creek? Also, am I correct in understanding that these existing buildings would be taken out? The National Association of Latino Arts and Culture has their office in this area and they recently received funds to restore their facilities. They are coming together with Westside cultural corridor.
 - Also, somebody raised the issue of talking to property owners. Keep in mind that some of those individuals lease property.
- Dwayne Bohuslav – Regarding moving forward with the schedule, I do not see where the trails will take place. Mr. Rooke pointed out where they are located.
- Jesse Lara – I grew up on the Southside and am very familiar with where the creeks are located and Mr. Rooke has asked you to submit your comments by Monday. In my opinion, I think you need more

time. I do not think you can make a good evaluation by then. I ask that you at least take until the 2nd week in May.

- Look at eminent domain very carefully.
 - Look at vegetation very carefully. We need to talk to people as to why vegetation is going to be removed.
 - If you are going to include local art, I hope you will consider local artists. There is a lot of local talent and I hope you will use that throughout the project.
 - Sanitation facilities, will there be toilet facilities? And of course they need to be handicapped accessible.
- Mr. Ramirez said that the committee is not only encouraging art but they also built it into the project. Also, in terms of reaping the economic benefits, the committee hopes residents have the first shot at establishing new businesses.
 - Mr. Lara said that if you pull out a lady's rose bushes, she will get very upset if you don't tell her why.
 - Mr. Ramirez said that no one is trying to uproot anyone in an oppressive kind of way.
 - Cosima Colvin – Along those same lines, would it be beneficial for the subcommittees to try to reconvene and present the report to their subcommittee members? Given that it has been 10 months since we last reviewed it and now we only have 1 ½ weeks to review it, it does not seem like sufficient time. Mr. Rooke said that they group had discussed having the review period be a bit longer.
 - Suzanne Scott said the document would be a living document and would in fact be taken out to the community throughout another outreach effort. Ms. Scott said that while changes could continue to be made, an approved report was needed to share the approved concepts with potential funding partners. The document is a working document to start with. We may be adding additional things to it but we need to provide a basis.
 - Ms. Calvin said that with regards to being sensitive to the issue of uprooting families, she urged SARA to be aware that the office of historic preservation is very involved with the demolition of properties and that SARA may also need to be talking to them regarding their future plans.
 - Eduardo Garza said he saw a mention of door hangers that would be delivered to property owners. He asked when information will be disseminated to people that will be impacted by this. He said that there should be a public relations campaign with video that would prepare the public that live in that area. SARA staff said door hangers were used as an outreach tool for a workshop and the door hangers were distributed to everyone living within ¼ mile on either side of the creeks.
 - Ms. LaGrange said she was also concerned about the quality of the products that will be purchased for the project, specifically concrete or asphalt. She asked that SARA buy a good product. She said it is ok to save a few pennies but not at the expense of long term costs. She urged SARA to do it right the first time.
 - Mr. Lara asked who the funding partners would be and how much influence they would have over the publicity of this project? He cited the AT&T Center and said he would hate to see Coca Cola sponsor a creek and then have it named after Coca Cola. He asked if the amount of money they give would allow them to name the project. He then again asked the committee to postpone the comment deadline to the second Monday in May. Ms. Scott said they would not be doing any corporate naming and that

they are looking at multiple funding partners including the city, county, Corp of Engineers, and public agencies. She said that if SARA looked at private partnerships, it is typically with adjacent property owners.

Mr. Radle said that in the spirit of hearing what folks have to say, he wanted to accept the suggestion to push back the deadline for comments. Mr. Radle motioned to approve and Ms. Walsh seconded the motion. All were in favor of ending the comment period on May 9th.

- Ms. Lizcano asked if the flood plain report was the latest FEMA study. Mr. Rooke said that he would make sure this is clearly noted on all maps. On page 20 – figure 1 has the FEMA and it shows it effective September 2010 – need to add it to other figures.

Mr. Rodriguez then announced he had a statement he wanted to make for the record. He said he is the one that started this project or came to the general manager at the river authority with the request. He said there has been a lot of a comment in favor of and against the project over the years and from many parts of the area. He said that he appreciated the support – and the committee that was formed from the recommendation made to general manager. Mr. Rodriguez then said that when we say restoring the Westside Creeks and trails we need to stop thinking of it as a long term project. He said it needs to be made a priority and given urgency because of the impact it will have on the Westside. He asked for urgency because of the funds that could be committed to other causes if we simply wait until our time comes. He said the time had come and as leaders and voters the audience and committee members have the power to make it happen. He said he is 70 years old and cannot afford to wait another 30-40 years as it has been suggested. He said elected officials will not be here forever so I bring this out to you all and leave you with this thought. He said this was his sense of urgency. He said the community had been waiting and that now they have the tasks to repair some of the damage that was done when the Corp of Engineers solved the immediate concern of flooding. He reminded everyone that it is not about the committee, it is about serving the community. Mr. Ramirez thanked him for his continued sponsorship and momentum.

IV. Miscellaneous Items

Mr. Garza urged the committee/SARA to organize a walk/run on each of the creeks to promote the project “para que se haga el borlote,” or “to create the hype”.

V. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the oversight committee was not scheduled at this time.

VI. Adjourn

Ms. Lizcano thanked everyone for attending the meeting and announced that it was now adjourned.

Action Items

- Change the comment deadline from May 2 to May 9
- Look at possibility of using 2010 census data

- Add transit routes on pages 27-37
- Label parcels owned by public agencies with the names of the specific agencies that own them
- Refer to location map as “inset”
- Make San Pedro Creek Type B project clearer
- Reach out to property owners potentially affected by right of way acquisition and keep in mind that not all own the property but are instead leasing
- Consider designating 4 feet for bikes on multi-use paths
- Clearly note that maps are based on latest FEMA DFIRM maps.

Distribution

- WCROC
- SARA Staff
- Consultant Team