



## Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting December 8, 2009 – 6:00 PM

### Meeting Notes

#### Attendees:

Members and Alternates – Robert Ramirez (WCROC Co-Chair), Olga Lizcano (WCROC Co-Chair), Abigail Kinnison (Beacon Hill NA), George Martínez (Woodlawn Lake NA), Joanne Walsh (Downtown Residents Association), Ashley Hernandez (Student Representative), Rod Radle (San Antonio Alternative Housing), Jude Valdez (UTSA), Dr. Catherine Rainwater (Our Lady of the Lake University), Abel Ramirez (San Antonio Wheelmen).

Elected Officials – Roberto Rodriguez (SARA Board Member).

Staff and Consultants – Rudy Farias (SARA), Gloria Rodriguez (SARA), Ed Garza (AECOM), Andy Rooke (AECOM), Rudy Rivera (RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc.), William Long (RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc.).

Members of the Public – Robert Browning (COSA Public Works), Margarita Hernandez (COSA Public Works), Charlotte Kahl (OST), Rob Newman (USACE), Bud Abbott, Lissa Martinez (Basura Bash), Mardi Baron (San Antonio Conservation Society), Narcisso Cano, Jacque Thomas (JACOBS), Charissa Kelly (USACE), Neil Thomas (JACOBS), Charles M. Bartlett, Barbara Hall (San Antonio Conservation Society), Kerim Jacaman (Bexar County Infrastructure Department).

#### I. Welcome & Introductions

Olga Lizcano (WCROC Co-Chair) called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for attending. Robert Ramirez (WCROC Co-Chair) added that he also wanted to thank all the new attendees and said he hopes they continue to be involved. Mr. Ramirez recognized Rob Newman (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), who said he was the Chief of Planning from Fort Worth, TX. He said he is here to listen and see if the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers can possibly participate in the future.

Mr. Ramirez then welcomed Charles Bartlett. Mr. Bartlett said he is the Vice-Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Board. He added that he served with Mr. Rodriguez on the Linear Creekway Parks Advisory Board and is President of the Salado Creek Foundation. Mr. Bartlett said he wanted to be at the meeting to congratulate everyone on getting the endorsement of the Parks and Recreation Board. He said all the creeks were clearly named and this is the first board to discuss extending the Linear Creeks Advisory Board to the Westside. He added that he remembers that in 1989 the Salado Creek springs were cemented, but soon after, the pressure built up and the water found its way to the surface in the form of hundreds of springs in Fort Sam. Mr. Bartlett said that this committee has found a way to put pressure all around the city. He said that because the awareness level has been raised about the Westside Creeks, there are a lot of supporters now and that he is one of them.

Mr. Ramirez thanked him for his support and for bringing copies of the resolution for the committee to see. He read the following excerpt from the resolution, "Whereas, the Westside Creeks of San Antonio, being the Apache, Alazán, Martínez, and San Pedro, qualify in the same manner as the current funded water ways and have unique cultural and historic significance". Mr. Ramirez asked Suzanne Scott (SARA) if she had anything else to add to what Mr. Bartlett had said. Ms. Scott replied that she did not have anything further to add other than that she is very pleased with the resolution. Abigail Kinnison (Beacon Hill N.A.) said she invited Angela Hartzel (Green Spaces Alliance). Ms. Hartzel said that her organization does a lot that relates well to the Westside Creeks Restoration Project. She said they have a number of community groups that are interested in working on community gardens throughout the creekways. Mr. Ramirez then asked Lissa Martinez (Basura Bash) to stand and be recognized. She said that she is here to promote the Basura Bash and to find a tributary leader for the Alazán/Apache Creeks.

## **II. Approval of the Meeting Minutes (Nov. 2009)**

Ms. Lizcano stated that the next item was the approval of the November 2009 meeting minutes. She asked if there were any comments or corrections to the minutes. Mr. Ramirez pointed out that on page 1, the reference to the president of OLLU needs to be in the feminine form. He added that on page 4 the reference to Basura Bash should be in the year 2010. Ms. Lizcano then asked if there were any objections to approving the minutes with those corrections and since there were none, the minutes were approved.

## **III. October Public Workshop #2 Findings**

Next, Ms. Lizcano asked Ed Garza (AECOM) to give the report on the October Public Workshop #2 findings. Mr. Garza thanked Ms. Lizcano and started by covering the summary of Public Workshop #2. He said that the project team has had a chance to meet with each of the subcommittees and go over the catalyst areas with all the input collected to date. Mr. Garza then discussed the overall vision and framework plan of the project. He discussed the attendance of the second workshop and said that there was a good amount of public input. He said that what he will be presenting is a collection of the changes and comments received from the subcommittees.

Mr. Garza started with the Alazán Creek Catalyst Site #1 and said that there were no changes since the second workshop. He used a rendering of Alazán Creek Catalyst Site #1 and explained opportunities in the area. Then he said the opportunities consisted of a multi-use trail, riparian restoration, park land, an expanded corridor, a pedestrian bridge, a park shelter and parking, an existing school, a sports field, and mixed-use redevelopment.

Mr. Garza then discussed Alazán Creek Catalyst Site #2. He pointed out the opportunities for a multi-use trail, riparian restoration, park land, Mario Farias Park, and a pedestrian bridge. He then explained the red and green lines that he said were trails, one of which was a primary and the other was the secondary trail. Mr. Garza said the primary trail would be a multi-use trail and handicap accessible. He added that the secondary trail would be more sporadic and informal.

Mr. Garza then discussed the intersection at West Commerce Street, which is Alazán Creek Catalyst Site #3. He said the historical significance of the area is very important when you consider the Battle of Alazán. He added that the opportunities for this catalyst site are a multi-use trail, riparian restoration, park land, an expanded lake area, the Battle of Alazán Memorial Plaza/Park, Battle of Alazán Museum, and a mixed-

use redevelopment. Mr. Garza said this area might be the first phase of the BRT system in 2012-13. He said that it would help support infill, mixed-use area, and other opportunities.

Mr. Garza then focused on Apache Creek and said that the Apache Creek Catalyst Site 1 was near Our Lady of the Lake University. He pointed out the existing lake, opportunities for enhancing the bridges, areas for retail/mixed-use, student housing, the future BRT station, a pedestrian bridge, a Veterans memorial, and the possible expansion of the lake into Rosedale Park. He added that this was a big transportation opportunity zone. Mr. Garza mentioned the San Antonio Alternative Housing project that will be a model for trails in the neighborhood.

Then Mr. Garza discussed the Apache Creek Catalyst Site #2. He pointed out the opportunities for an amphitheatre/storm water detention, an open-air public market, adaptive re-use of existing school, a produce center, a dance hall/senior center, additional parking, public restrooms, a skate park, and climbing walls. Mr. Garza then discussed Apache Creek Catalyst Site #3, which he said was the Brazos Community Gardens. He explained that the opportunities for this catalyst site were a pedestrian bridge, low water crossing, community gardens, enhanced bridges for pedestrians/bicycle use, upland restoration, cultural center, horticulture pavilion, historic cemetery, and community activist promenade. He said one of the issues here is the industrial complex that is very close to the creek that is underused and full of opportunities.

Mr. Garza then brought up a rendering of Martínez Catalyst Site 1 and explained opportunities in the area. Mr. Garza said the opportunities consisted of a multi-use trail, riparian restoration, park land, an expanded corridor, a pedestrian bridge, a corridor gateway plaza, a future BRT station, a playground, a basketball court, and a community garden. Mr. Garza continued by saying that north of Fredericksburg Rd., will be a challenge to get the multi-use trail under Interstate 10. He added that there has already been a lot of land purchased by the City of San Antonio along this corridor from the 1998 flood buyout program.

Then Mr. Garza discussed Martínez Catalyst Creek Site #2. He pointed out the opportunities for a multi-use trail, riparian restoration, park land, an expanded corridor, a pedestrian bridge, a park shelter, parking, a basketball court, and use of an existing church. Mr. Garza mentioned that there are quite a few opportunities for pedestrian improvements in this area. He said there are some limited infill opportunities on Cincinnati Street.

Mr. Garza then discussed San Pedro Creek and he used a rendering of San Pedro Creek Catalyst Site #1 to explain the opportunities in the area. He mentioned that this was near Casa Navarro and the historic city center. He said the biggest change would be the removal of the County jail. Mr. Garza said that conversations have already begun with the architects of the future Federal Courthouse. He added that the opportunities included a multi-use trail, riparian restoration, park land, expanded corridor, historic buildings, future courthouse, historic wagon road, and performance lawn.

Then Mr. Garza discussed San Pedro Creek Catalyst Site #2. He pointed out the opportunities for a multi-use trail, a linear sculpture park, a parkway to the Riverwalk, a cultural plaza, a reflecting pool, San Pedro Canal, a museum, and mixed-use development. He said they have met with Dean Steel, which is the major property owning company in the area. Mr. Garza then discussed San Pedro Creek Catalyst Site #3. He

explained that the opportunities for this catalyst site were a multi-use trail, riparian restoration, park land, expanded corridor, amphitheatre, sports fields, high density residential area, and mixed use.

Jude Valdez (UTSA) said he thought it was a great recommendation. He asked if this was the only site that had a community garden and also wanted to know if it was a space for anyone to have a garden. Mr. Garza said other creeks already have community gardens, such as Martínez Creek. Joanne Walsh (Downtown Residents Association) said that Ms. Kinnison was involved in that community garden.

Dr. Rainwater said that after the Apache Subcommittee meeting, she requested that Andy Rooke (AECOM) send her the rendering of Apache Catalyst Site # 1. She said she then emailed it with an explanation to Dr. David Estes (Executive Vice President of OLLU) and to Dr. Tessa Martinez Pollack (OLLU President). She added that after their consultation, Dr. Estes sent her the following list of comments:

- OLLU trustees have recently approved a Master Facilities Plan. One of its guiding principles is “connect the campus to Elmendorf Lake.”
- OLLU is pleased to see that the Catalyst Site is designed to attract citizens for recreation through the multi-use path.
- The redesign of the bridge will enhance the intersection of Commerce and 24<sup>th</sup> St. It will complement work the city and CPS have agreed to fund to enhance 24<sup>th</sup> St. through the campus. The street will be reduced to 2 lanes and there will be a wide center median with plantings. Bike lanes will be added. Power lines will also be buried from the south end of the bridge. The proposed design should include the removal of overhead power lines from the intersection to the south end of the bridge.

George Martinez (Woodlawn Lake N.A.) asked if the light grey area on the rendering was the flood plain. Mr. Garza confirmed that it was indeed the flood plain. Ms. Walsh asked if the motion from Martinez Creek to have all the trails be multi-use would be used. Mr. Garza said that the intention is for the primary trail to be a mixed-use facility, but that the secondary will not be as structured of a path. Mr. Valdez asked what the proposed museum was on San Pedro Creek Catalyst Site #2. Mr. Garza said it was the proposed Art P.A.C.E. museum.

#### **IV. Restoration Alternatives & Report Outline**

Next, Ms. Lizcano asked Andy Rooke (AECOM) to discuss the restoration alternatives and the report outline. Mr. Rooke said one of the things that was discussed during the last workshop was the engineering side of the project. He discussed the relationship between restoration alternatives and flood impacts, and said that most of the options would require some land acquisition in order to avoid from increasing flood levels. Mr. Rooke pointed out the minimal, moderate and aggressive restoration intensities that were run through hydraulic models of a section of Martinez Creek. Then he discussed the potential restoration intensity by stream reach. He illustrated with a map, explaining that the green lines identified areas that might support the most aggressive restoration, the blue lines depicted moderate restoration areas, and the red lines showed areas that due to existing flood issues or proximity of structures might only support minimal restoration intensity.

Mr. Rooke then discussed that while the current conceptual phase will not include sketches of the entire project area, with the focus being on the catalyst sites, there will be depictions of sample restoration

details and areas. He showed sketches and photos that illustrated how some of the potential restoration intensities might ultimately look, from very natural to very urban environments, and stages in between. Mr. Rooke then discussed the outline of the draft report. In his PowerPoint presentation, he brought up a draft outline that included:

- Executive Summary
- Acknowledgements
- Introduction, History, and Purpose
- Planning Process
- Prototype Features
- Catalyst Sites & Restoration Reaches
- Economic Evaluation
- General Recommendations
- Appendices
- Bibliography

Ms. Kinnison asked if the levels of restoration will be available in the report. Mr. Rooke said that the details would be determined in the next phase of the project and would not be available for this report. Ms. Kinnison asked where the conceptual levels of restoration would be found in this report. Mr. Rooke said it would be along with the catalyst site descriptions of each creek.

Mr. Valdez asked if the images used to show the levels of restoration were natural. Mr. Rooke said that it was not a completely natural area. Mr. Martinez asked if reducing the potential risk of flooding is one of the goals. Mr. Rooke said that flood reduction is not a goal of this project, but that flood levels will not be increased, and may be slightly decreased in some areas. He added that SARA is undertaking a storm water detention project that is intended to address the current flooding problems.

Ms. Kinnison said she thought that the report would make the project shovel ready. Mr. Rooke said there are no design plans as part of the current scope of the project. He added that there might be an identification of the pilot. Ms. Kinnison asked what he thought the timeline would be to take the project to the design phase. Mr. Rooke said that for a pilot it could take at least 24 months. Rod Radle (San Antonio Alternative Housing Corporation) said that would be determined by how much land would need to be acquired. Mr. Rooke said land acquisition and permits will drive the schedule.

#### **V. Public Workshop #3 – Proposed Date & Venue**

Mr. Ramirez asked Rudy Farias (SARA) to discuss the proposed date and venue for the next public workshop. Mr. Farias said that the proposed dates are February 27<sup>th</sup> or March 6<sup>th</sup>. He said there was a suggestion made that the meeting be near either the Martínez or San Pedro Creek. He listed the possible locations as:

- Zion Lutheran
- City of San Antonio, development Services Board Room
- VIA Boardroom
- Fox Tech High School
- San Antonio College

- The Vistana

Mr. Farias said on the Martinez Creek, Zion Lutheran Church had not returned any of the phone calls left with them. On San Pedro Creek, he said that the City of San Antonio Board Room is available at a cost. He said that the VIA Boardroom is available and thanks to Ms. Kinnison, would be free of charge. Mr. Ramirez asked if there was a motion to vote on the location and date tonight. The committee decided to vote on the date of the next workshop. There were 7 votes for February 27<sup>th</sup> and 3 votes for March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Ms. Walsh asked that the project team continue to attempt to contact the Zion Lutheran Church. She recommended the motion and Ms. Kinnison seconded the motion. Mr. Valdez recommended the VIA Boardroom and Mr. Radle seconded the motion. The committee then voted on the location of the next workshop. There were 5 votes for the Zion Lutheran Church and 6 votes for the VIA Boardroom. Mr. Ramirez announced that the recommendation would be to have the third public workshop at the VIA Boardroom on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

## **VI. Miscellaneous Items**

Mr. Ramirez then said that this item would start with reports from the subcommittees. He asked Ms. Kinnison to report on Martinez Creek. Ms. Kinnison said that they wanted to recommend that the pedestrian bridges are all multi-use trails that can include bicycle use. She said this mention was only for the primary trails. She added that the other recommendation was about public art. She said there was a formal motion that 1% of the budget be dedicated to art. Ms. Kinnison motioned that 1% of the budget be dedicated to art and Ms. Lizcano seconded the motion. Mr. Ramirez put it to a vote and 10 voted in favor of recommending to the SARA Board that 1% of the budget be dedicated to public art. Ms. Walsh said that the 1% for public art may come from a different source. She said that we should look for as many funding sources as possible. Ms. Kinnison said that it should not be an afterthought, but rather a part of the design from the beginning. Mr. Rooke said that if you build it into the design, then that is one way to improve the odds of it happening.

Mr. Ramirez then asked Mr. Martinez to speak about the Alazán Creek subcommittee meeting. Mr. Martinez said the two concerns were the difference between the terms bike path and bike trail. He added that there are different bikes for different types of bike corridors. He said the other was the acquisition of private land. He said it is a very sensitive subject and some people have lived in the area for generations. Mr. Ramirez then asked Dr. Rainwater to discuss recommendations from the Apache Creek subcommittee meeting. Dr. Rainwater said there were no recommendations to the Oversight Committee.

Then Mr. Ramirez said that San Pedro Creek was next and that Mr. Rodriguez met with the future federal judge. Mr. Rodriguez said that Jerry Geyer (Casa Navarro) called him and said that Mayor Castro is very interested in the Westside Creeks. He added that the Mayor would like the creeks to be part of the sales tax initiative. He said that Mr. Geyer presented a package to the Mayor including information about the Westside Creeks Restoration Project. Narcisso Cano said the first recommendation is that an effort is made to use the re-circulated water from the underground tunnel. He said the goal is to have running water in the urban portion of the creek. Mr. Cano said the second recommendation would be that a presentation be made to county and city elected officials about the vision for San Pedro Creek. He said he wants it to specifically be about only San Pedro Creek due to the upcoming changes and added that it should be made soon. He said it needs to be made clear that we are talking about a long-term, multi-generational vision. He said the third recommendation was that there be coordination between SARA

staff and the Federal Courthouse staff. Mr. Cano said the fourth recommendation was that SARA should continue the urban design initiative, specifically for San Pedro Creek.

Abel Ramirez (San Antonio Wheelmen) seconded the motion to use the recycled water to fill San Pedro Creek. Dr. Rainwater asked for discussion of the motion. Mr. Rooke said that it should be possible, but any details would occur in the design phase. Mr. Ramirez clarified that the recommendation is for SARA to pursue using recycled water into the urban portion.

Mr. Farias said the recommendations do not need to be voted on individually and will be included in the overall report, which is then presented to the SARA Board. Mr. Rodriguez said that the judge supports the project and wants to incorporate our plans in his design, if possible. He added that in essence they are willing to work with the Westside Creeks Restoration Project and leave space for trails along the creek. Mr. Abel Ramirez seconded the motion that the information be included in the report and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Farias said the consultant team is meeting with local and state officials. He said there are two briefings next week, one with Congressman Ciro Rodriguez and the other with Congressman Gonzalez's office. Kerim Jacaman (Bexar County Infrastructure Department) said that Joe Aceves (Bexar County) mentioned that a presentation will be made to commissioners court. Mr. Farias said that SARA is aware of the activity of San Pedro Creek and said as these opportunities arise, we will do our best to get in front of them. He said he does not want to single out any creek and instead, focus on all the creeks together. Mr. Ramirez said that the motions should be included in the report with the notation that some activities may warrant entering the second phase of the project quickly.

Mr. Ramirez asked about the removal of concrete and how much would be removed. Mr. Rooke said we are not at that point of the project yet, but the intent is to remove as much of the concrete as possible. He added that some portions may need to remain in the urban areas of San Pedro Creek. Mr. Farias wanted to mention a meeting of the Westside (TIRZ) board of directors. He presented the Westside Creeks Restoration Project to them. Ms. Kinnison asked if they prioritized anything or if they were just listening. Mr. Farias said they were just listening.

Ms. Kinnison wanted to mention the street car committee will be making a recommendation of the starter line of the streetcar project on December 15<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 a.m. Charlotte Kahl (Old Spanish Trail) said she is happy that the node near the BRT station on Martínez Creek is important to the Old Spanish Trail. She added that linkages are very important to the community.

Lissa Martinez (Basura Bash) then asked to speak about Basura Bash. She detailed the history of Basura Bash and explained the community involvement. She stated that she came to the meeting to recruit a tributary leader for Alazán Creek. She said that the Alazán Creek had 300 people attend the annual river clean-up for that area. Mr. Rodriguez said that he was contacted by some students and would like Ms. Martinez's contact information so he could pass it along to them.

Ms. Martinez said that as a child, she remembers seeing floods in the creeks. She said that people in her area have never seen a natural creek on the Westside. She also wanted to suggest a field trip be taken to the other waterways in San Antonio. Ms. Martinez added that there are lots of activities that the

committee can get involved in while it waits for the report to be developed. She also conveyed the need to have more community involvement. Mr. Ramirez said that he would look into field trips to other creeks in San Antonio.

#### **VII. Next Meeting**

Mr. Ramirez reminded the group that the next meeting will be on January 12, 2010 at 6:00 pm at the San Antonio River Authority. He added that it would be a combined meeting, including all the subcommittees.

#### **VIII. Adjourn**

With no further items to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

#### **Action Items**

- Mr. Ramirez pointed out that on page 1 of the November meeting minutes, the reference to the president of OLLU needs to be in the feminine form.
- Mr. Ramirez added that on page 4 the reference to Basura Bash should be in the year 2010.
- Ms. Walsh asked that the project team continue to attempt to contact the Zion Lutheran Church as a possible location for the third public workshop.
- There was a recommendation that 1% of the budget be set aside for public art.
- In future references to trails, be clear on whether they are bike paths or bike trails.
- Mr. Cano would like water from the tunnel underneath San Pedro Creek to be re-circulated into the urban portions of the creek.
- Mr. Cano would like a presentation to be made to local, city, and county officials about San Pedro Creek.
- Mr. Cano would like there to be coordination between the Federal Courthouse staff and SARA.
- Mr. Cano said the fourth recommendation was that SARA should continue the urban design initiative, specifically for San Pedro Creek.

#### **Attachments**

- Sign-in Sheets
- Presentation
- Handouts from Presentations

#### **Distribution**

- WCROC
- SARA Staff
- Consultant Team