



DRAFT

Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee (WCROC) Meeting September 3, 2009 – 6:00 PM

Meeting Notes

Attendees: **Members and Alternates** – Robert Ramirez, WCROC Co-Chair; Abigail Kinnison, Beacon Hill NA; Santiago Garcia, Jr., Westside Development Corporation; George Martinez, Woodlawn Lake NA; Joan Korte, Downtown Residents Association; Joanne Walsh, Downtown Residents Association; Abel Ramirez, San Antonio Wheelmen; Rod Radle, San Antonio Alternative Housing; and Dr. Catherine Rainwater, Our Lady of the Lake University. **Elected Officials** – Roberto Rodriguez, SARA Board Member. **Staff and Consultants** – Suzanne Scott, SARA; Jim Boenig, SARA; Rudy Farias, SARA; Gloria Rodriguez, SARA; Bob Browning, COSA; Genie Cooper, Preservation Matters; Brad Smith, AECOM; Bruce Meighen, AECOM; Melissa Sherburn, AECOM; Emmanuel Didier, AECOM; Ed Garza, AECOM; Andy Rooke, AECOM; Rudy Rivera, RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc., and William Long, RJ RIVERA Associates, Inc. **Members of the Public** – Jerold Suarez; Jamie Ramirez; David Garcia; Jesse H. Valdez; Jose Gonzalez; Yolanda Jimenez; M. Valdez; Albert Esquivel; Pat Ramirez-Long; Jesse U. De Los Santos, Jaime P. Martinez, LULAC; Adrian Flores, LULAC; Giovanni Gagliano, Giovanni's; Rosemary Geyer, Casa Navarro; Jerry Geyer, Casa Navarro; Ruth Buentello, San Anto Cultural Arts; and Abigail Grass, Lanier High School Architecture.

1.0 Welcome & Introductions

Robert Ramirez, WCROC Co-Chair, called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for attending. He announced that his co-chair, Olga Lizcano, was out of town and could not attend. Mr. Ramirez then recognized Jamie Martinez, with LULAC, and welcomed all new-comers to the Westside Creek meetings. He also asked the consultant team to stand and be recognized.

2.0 Approval of the Meeting Minutes (June/July 2009)

Mr. Ramirez then asked everyone to review the minutes from both June and July 2009. Abigail Kinnison, Beacon Hill NA, asked that her name be added to the June 2009 minutes. There were no other objections and the minutes were approved with the correction of Ms. Kinnison's name being added to the list of attendees in the June 2009 Minutes.

3.0 Draft Framework Plan Catalyst Sites

Mr. Ramirez then introduced Bruce Meighen, with AECOM. Mr. Meighen a PowerPoint presentation of the project purpose. He explained that the Westside Creek Restoration Project is a community-based planning effort initiated in 2008 by the San Antonio River Authority (SARA). He added that its mission is to develop concepts for restoring the environmental condition of the Alazán, Apache, Martínez, and San Pedro Creeks, maintain the current flood control components of these creeks, and provide increased opportunities for people to enjoy the urban creeks.

Mr. Meighen then discussed the project schedule with a graph that depicted that the project is in the vision development and feasibility analysis phase. Mr. Meighen explained the process summary by saying that studying the existing conditions helped the project team understand the key issues and constraints. He said the goal was to take the information provided at the first workshop and apply it to the project design. Mr. Meighen said that the work sessions were about refining those ideas into opportunities, especially at catalyst sites, or areas along the creeks with application for eco-restoration and revitalization.

Mr. Meighen then discussed the April 19th Workshop and said that there were 160 attendees. He explained that the “Imagination Station” Workshop was across the lake from the Earth Day celebration at Woodlawn Lake. He said that strong support emerged for restoration. He added that other ideas for all the creeks included public art, gathering spaces, urban parks, trail connections, and safety. Mr. Meighen then used a series of slides to explain the diverse comments received at the workshop. He pointed out how each creek would be able to have its own character, design, and identity.

Mr. Meighen then asked Emmanuel Didier, with AECOM, to discuss the design approach to the Oversight Committee. He started by thanking everyone for the input that was received over the previous four days. He then discussed safety, redevelopment, revitalization, connections, restoration, flood control, and water quality issues along each of these creeks. To see the design concepts presented for each of the creeks, see the attached presentation.

4.0 Creek Visions and Subcommittee Reports

Brad Smith, with AECOM, discussed the vision for Martínez Creek and thanked everyone for their input. He then discussed Catalyst Site #1 and said that it involved restoration and neighborhood services. Then Mr. Didier discussed Martínez Creek’s Catalyst Site #2 and said that discussions included community gardens, sports fields, and neighborhood services.

They then asked Ms. Kinnison to discuss what she heard at the Martínez Creek Meeting. She said that there were a lot of disconnects between neighborhoods due to roads and creek barriers. She added that pedestrian connections and active recreation sites were discussed as well. Ms. Kinnison said the proposed bus rapid transit system that VIA is proposing would connect the community as well. She mentioned that community gardens were also discussed. She recommended that the existing Beacon Hill garden should be added as a catalyst site as well.

Joanne Walsh, Downtown Residents Association, said that she was at the VIA SmartWay SA meetings this week and she made sure to discuss the Huisache Bus Rapid Transit Station. She said they discussed taking into account the human element. She added that she appreciated Mr. Smith coming over to the VIA meetings to make the connection between the two projects.

Mr. Smith then discussed the Alazán Creek Subcommittee Meeting that was held on the morning of September 1, 2009. He said that the vision for Alazán Creek Catalyst Site #1 included history, community gardens, and economic development. Mr. Smith then discussed the Alazán Creek Catalyst Site #1. Then Mr. Didier discussed the ideas for the Alazán Creek Catalyst Site #2 and also discussed the Alazán Creek Catalyst Site #3 which included history, community connections, and economic development. Mr. Ramirez asked Jesse Valdez to report on what was discussed at the Alazán Creek. He said that they discussed the Battle of the Alazán.

Mr. Smith then discussed the Vision for Apache Creek. Then he explained what the ideas were for the Apache Creek Catalyst Site #1. He said it contained mixed use transit oriented development, connections to Our Lady of the Lake University, and the possible extension of the lake. Ms. Walsh said that modern street cars were being discussed by VIA to travel to the university. Then Mr. Smith discussed ideas for the Apache Creek Catalyst Site #2 that included a local market, connected amphitheatre, and to reuse the vacant school as a neighborhood center. Mr. Didier then discussed the ideas for the Apache Creek Catalyst Site #3 with included new extended arts district connected by new trail connections along the creek. They asked Dr. Cathy Rainwater to report on what she heard during the Apache Creek Subcommittee meeting. She said that there was support for maintaining the lake and transit along Commerce Street. She said the students need more transit options in the area.

Mr. Smith then discussed the vision and ideas for the San Pedro Creek Catalyst Site #1 which included bringing back history, demolition of large buildings, and to recreate historical context. Then Mr. Smith discussed the ideas for Catalyst Site #2 which included an artwalk, urban wildlife habitat, connections to downtown and riverwalk, new art center, children's garden, and lofts in the area.

Then Mr. Smith discussed the ideas for San Pedro Catalyst Site #3 which was added due to the conversations held during the subcommittee meeting. He said the ideas discussed included mixed use redevelopment, residential edges, and future light rail connections. He also pointed out the historical acequia that used to flow through the area. He thanked Jerry Geyer, with Casa Navarro, for bringing the idea of the third catalyst site to their attention.

Mr. Ramirez then asked Narcisso Cano to discuss what he heard during the San Pedro Subcommittee meeting. Mr. Cano said that he would be joined with Jerry Geyer, Casa Navarro, in discussing what happened at the meeting. Mr. Cano explained there was only six weeks until the architectural team was selected to redevelop the area where the future federal courthouse will be downtown. Mr. Geyer added that the San Pedro Creek rarely has water and is now only there to catch surface run-off. He said the site of the future courthouse is the largest catalyst site that exists downtown. Mr. Geyer mentioned that a master plan is currently under development for that area. He said that Casa Navarro has a visionary plan for the buildings that will be knocked down that includes the area becoming a historical site. Mr. Cano said that the subcommittee discussed recycled water could play an important role in bringing back water to the surface of San Pedro Creek.

5.0 October Workshop Format

Mr. Meighen thanked everyone for their support and ideas. He said he hopes to have more people at the next workshop that will be held on Saturday, October 24, 2009. He asked everyone to tell their friends, relatives, and neighbors about the workshop so the attendance will be greater than the last workshop. George Martinez, Woodlawn Lake NA, expressed his hopes they include community gardens on all the creeks. Ed Garza, AECOM, said that the catalyst sites will be refined before the October Workshop. Mr. Smith added that the ideas will be combined to create an overview for each creek at the October Workshop.

6.0 Public Comments

There was a comment that audio equipment be present at future meetings. Another comment was made that the dam near Brazos Street should be improved and the area be restocked with wildlife. There was a comment that San Anto Cultural Arts work hand in hand with any public art projects that are connected with this project. Another Comment was made to ensure that small businesses that currently exist are able to continue to exist once the improvements are made. There was also a comment that an "adopt-a-creek" program be implemented.

Ms. Walsh said she brought a set of notes to pass along to the design team from the VIA meetings if anyone was interested. Roberto Rodriguez, SARA Board Member said that he was pleased with all the meetings this week and that they were right track. Adrian Flores, with LULAC, asked that elected officials be notified of the upcoming workshop. Rudy Farias, SARA, said that city and county engineers were involved. Mr. Garza added that elected officials have been briefed and will be invited to the October Workshop.

Ms. Kinnison asked that the VIA CFO and CEO need to be added to the mailing list. Suzanne Scott, SARA's General Manager, said that there are lots of opportunities for this area, including remapping the watershed for this area. She said they are exploring the opportunities for detention along the creeks. She said the city engineers are very aware of these ideas and this is a great opportunity to create synergy.

Mr. Ramirez invited everyone to come to the future subcommittee and oversight committee meetings. Genie Cooper, Preservation Matters, thanked SARA for moving this project forward. She said she has been involved with the San Antonio River since 1972. She asked that everyone bring their friends and neighbors

7.0 Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned.

8.0 Open House

Action Items

- Add Abigail Kinnison's name to the June 2009 list of attendees.
- Review the existing Beacon Hill gardens as a possible catalyst site.
- Ms. Kinnison asked that the VIA CFO and CEO need to be added to the mailing list.
- Adrian Flores, with LULAC, asked that elected officials be notified of the upcoming workshop.

Attachments

- Sign-in Sheets
- Workshop Presentation
- Handouts from Presentations

Distribution

- WCROC
- SARA Staff
- Consultant Team