



**MEETING NOTES
DECEMBER 4, 2015
SAN ANTONIO RIVER AUTHORITY
100 EAST GUENTHER, BOARD ROOM
8:30 A.M.**

ATTENDING: COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND ALTERNATES- Scott Baird, Ben Brewer, Ernest Bromley, Giorgio Colussi, Bob Corbo, Michael Cortez, Stella de la Garza, Pat DiGiovanni, Caleb Etheredge, Jerry Geyer, Theresa Gold, Scott Gustafson, Matt Penner, Patti Radle, Andi Rodriguez, Trey Whiddon **STAFF AND CONSULTANTS-** Kerry Averyt, Tony Canez, Allison Elder, Rudy Farias, Steve Graham, Claude Harding, Kerim Jacaman, Marianne Kumley, Jeff Mitchell, John Mize, Brice Moczygemba, Shiva Sandrana, Mario Schjetnan, Steve Tillotson, Linda Ximenes, Bridget Hinze **PUBLIC-** Perla Alarcon, Orlando Rangel, Robert Ramirez, Robert Rivard, Frank Monaco, Kelley Phillips, Estela Avery, David Tidwell, Anita Fernandez, Chris McKnight, Jose A. Vidal, Rick Isbell, Joan Miller, Scott Ball, Kim Miles, Kenny Geyer, Anna Alicia Romero, Mike Lackey, Beverly Purdy, Erika Haskins

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Michael Cortez called the meeting to order at 8:36 a.m. and reviewed the calendar items.

CALENDAR ITEMS

- a. San Pedro Creek Subcommittee meeting, January 14, 2016, 8:30 a.m. at 100 E. Guenther, Board Room
- b. Westside Creeks Restoration Oversight Committee (WCROC) meeting- December 8, 2015, 6:00 p.m. at 100 E. Guenther, Board Room

APPROVAL OF MEETING NOTES FROM NOVEMBER 12, 2015

The meeting notes were approved with the following corrections¹:

- On p. 3, the first line should read: "... nodes of *proposed change* from the inlet ..."
- On p. 3, ninth bullet, should read: " It is the only *historic* concrete bridge ..."
- On p. 3, tenth bullet, should read: "The amphitheater was moved from *between* Travis and Houston Streets ..."
- On p. 3, tenth bullet, second sentence should read: "This move *responds to the reduced*

¹ Text in italic and bold type indicates a decision made by the subcommittee members.

right of way available ...”

- On p. 3, 15th bullet, last sentence, should read: “They are *facilitating* air circulation ...”

Michael Cortez moved for approval of the meeting notes with the changes and Trey Whiddon seconded the motion.

PROJECT ACTIVITY UPDATE

Jeff Mitchell, Design Team Consultants, began his presentation with a summary of their activities since the last meeting with the Bexar County Commissioners Court in August.

- He described the significant redefinition of the project scope in Phase 1 that was the result of public feedback and the value engineering they conducted.
- As a result of the value engineering and public input, Phase 2 underwent significant design revisions.
- The third and final charrette with landscape architect Mario Schjetnan will be on December 3 and 4, focusing on the final wrap-up and programming. The two previous charrettes focused on the area from the Tree of Life Plaza to Houston Street and on Houston and Commerce Streets, primarily on the revised amphitheater, respectively.
- There has been significant progress in the design revisions of *Villa Lagunilla* and the landscape architect collaboration is largely complete.

REVISIONS TO THE 70 PERCENT DESIGN

Steve Tillotson and Mario Schjetnan walked everyone through the revisions to the design as a result of the landscape collaboration.

- The focus is from the Tree of Life for the origin of the historic narrative as well as the design narrative.
- There are several sources of inspiration for the modified design: the water itself in its natural state millennia ago; *manantiales* or springs and the way they shape the landscape from here to central Mexico; the natural stone that can be found all around the San Antonio area; the *ahuehete*, or bald cypress, one of the oldest trees in the world, naturally suited to riparian ecology; and the *ciénega*, or wetland to create another type of experience along the creek.
- There should be significant interaction between the user and the water. This linear park is more about community than the River Walk, as an active open space that goes downtown.
- Tiles will be used to call out the specific character of areas in relation to the benches along the inlet to Commerce Street as they relate to the configuration of the creek, integrated into the architectural walls. There will be touches and sparks of color all along the creek.
- The symbolic or didactic qualities, like the Tree of Life, will serve as an inspiration from our traditions, but not copy it.
- The inlet structure has a metal apron that establishes and transforms this infrastructure element to an icon of initiation of the project. There will be a raindrop screen and the narrative goes into a wetland of cypress trees. At the center is a large bench, which is the element that celebrates the *manatial*. On Camaron and Santa Rosa Streets, the trees come up to the street, establishing a beautiful waving in and out of the project. There will be an element of sculpture coming from Santa Rosa Street. Mr. Schjetnan passed around a model of the Tree of Life that has been developed.
- A section with the details includes 42 trees that embrace the space. The plantings will

be very lush plants that create a sense of space, lushness and river between five and six feet below the level of the street, so the people passing in their car can see the water, but it is protected from the cars. The preliminary rendering shows the tree of life and the forest embracing the creek. They will be using stone that is typical of San Antonio.

- There will be a continuity of ramps all along the project. There will be more ramps to go from the level of the street to the creek than stairs.
- A *paseo* is established at Martin Street, with a bioswale to bring the water from the street and percolate it into the street. There would be access to the creek at this point. There is a shaded *paseo* with a crown of trees and a huge bench and stones to get down into the water, creating a continuity of going down and up again.
- The Salinas Street Bridge is between Martin and Travis Streets. They have established a platform to make the strong turn the walls have here, which are conserved as they are today. Mr. Tillotson explained they would have liked to keep the historic Salinas Bridge, which is not an active vehicular bridge, but there were too many engineering actions that only weakened the bridge, so they decided to widen the creek and remove the bridge. In its place, they are creating a nice series of stone steps that will allow people to sit along that area and can become a stormwater spillway into the aquatic wetlands area below. There will be an overlook that allows you to see from there up to the Alameda Theater. A bioswale will be installed for treatment of the stormwater. There are strong definitive elements of the wetland with 80-foot swaths of land that create a character of the landscape in this segment.
- Mr. Schjetnan stated they are hoping the City will make improvements to Salinas Street, like paving and trees in keeping with those in the creek, to complement the enhancements in the creek.
- Mr. Tillotson pointed out the crest gate that will create a cascade on the downstream Travis Street Bridge side that will carry some of the water to create a gravity flow *acequia* on the other side.
- At the Alameda Theater and Houston Street the design has an elevated plaza with huge oak trees to create a marvelous elongated plaza from Travis to Houston Streets. There will be seating for people to come eat lunch or just relax in this area. The *acequia* is on the other side of the low *paseo*. Mr. Tillotson explained that as a result of the value engineering stone veneer was eliminated and there are a lot of concrete walls in the project, so they will use color and texture modifications of the concrete for the architectural effect. They will use the walls to carry the narrative of the creek using the stone to counterpoint and tiles to do the interpretation so there is a balance between the water, color, stone and plants with the engineering envelope that has to take place.
- Mr. Tillotson added the amphitheater, sunken plaza and esplanade was from Travis to Houston Streets originally, but this redistribution has left that area as a high bank esplanade and water wide enough to serve as a foreground for the reflection of the Alameda Theater. The sunken plaza concept was moved to the Dollar General area.
- From Travis to Commerce Streets there is an upper *paseo* next to the Alameda Theater and into the sunken plaza on Commerce Street. As you go from the street down into the performance area, there is a beautiful balcony that can also be seen at the crossing of Houston and Camaron Streets that can be used for everyday functions or for music as an “audiorama.”
- At Commerce Street, there will be a plaza at the level of the water with an island that is termed a “*chinampa*” (floating island) after the floating gardens of Xochimilco. As you come under the passage and up the ramp, with jets of water, and then an upper *paseo*

around it.

- Under the bridge there will be beautiful reflections of the water under the trees and the garden surrounded by the walls, creating a different character from the previous areas. This project changes character all along the way, with spaces of water and an urban feel.

There were several questions about parking.

- The City owns the parking lot for the Holiday Inn and they will renegotiate the terms when the lease is up.
- There is currently not a parking area at the tunnel inlet and the design team is discussing what to do about it.

Favorable comments by the subcommittee members included the following:

- They liked the location of the amphitheater and its design as an outdoor performing space, indicating it was “more San Antonio.”
- The street-to-creek connections are good.
- The juxtaposition of the spaces as they widen and narrow made good connections throughout.
- The new design of the Tree of Life Plaza was more inviting to the people.
- The bridges are becoming destinations and the whole plan is more inviting.
- The relation of the segments to the whole was appealing.
- It was evident a lot of thought had been put into the planning and they lauded the hard work done in a short time.

Wayfinding signage will be at every bridge and at access points with interpretive signage going in specific places to explain the social and geological history along the creek.

When asked about Camaron Street becoming a two-way street, Mr. Tillotson responded that the City was not interested in making that change. He would like for it to be a nice street to travel on. The suggestion was made to use mesquite block just in that one street. Mr. Schjetnan commented that the alignment and relationship of the street to the creek was important as was the history of the street name and the crayfish that used to be there.

BEXAR COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT & NEXT STEPS

Jeff Mitchell, Design Team Consultants reviewed the next steps:

- In August, had a significant reduction in construction costs and a reboot of the design for Phase 1 has added to the cost of the project. (Please see the presentation for more information.) Changes to the design have made it simpler, less complex, but there have been added elements that have increased the cost. Demolition of the Dollar General expands the project footprint.
- The charrette in November solidified some of the design, and there will need to be some added funding to construct the added footprint, although they cannot report hard costs at this point.
- Due to design revisions, there is a nine-month impact to the schedule. As it is now, they will complete all of the design at the end of November 2016 and send it for bid, so the construction duration will leave about 13-14 months for construction by May 5, 2018.
- The team could complete construction to about Travis Street point by May 5, 2018. A key recommendation is to use a construction manager at risk (CMAR) approach: SARA would contract with a builder/contractor on a cost consideration and heavy

qualification basis. The contractor would work for the owner and with the design team as the design is finished. There would be a guaranteed maximum pricing and the cost estimator will be part of the contractor's team. (Please see the presentation for more on the pros and cons of the CMAR approach.)

- Pros of CMAR approach include: the unspent funds are returned to the owner at the end of the construction, certain construction packages could be done early release, and the project up to Commerce Street could be completed by May 2018.
- Contradictions to the CMAR approach are potential cost implications: there may be less competition, which may result in higher prices. Compensation for pre-construction services will add to the costs, but can usually compensate for that in the value engineering. The owner still retains the control, but also has the liability for the design.
- The construction schedule is the driving factor, so CMAR is the recommended construction method. The contractor would build both phases as separate projects. There is not the same time constraint on finishing Phase 2, but it is not certain how much would be completed by then.
- Bexar County has used a CMAR approach for several of its projects including the AT&T Center and the Tobin Center.

Mr. Geyer requested asked that Mr. Mitchell also talk about Phase 2 when they go before the Commissioners, since it is such an important part of the flood control. Mr. Mitchell responded they have graphics, but did not finish them for this presentation, but will have them for the Commissioners Court.

The decision whether to make the CMAR selection as a one-step or two-step process still needs to be made as well as determining who will make the selection of the contractor. SARA would be involved in the selection and then manage the project. They would engage the contractor by April 2016 with a Request for Qualification (RFQ) package out by January 2016.

When asked about using local contractors, Mr. Mitchell replied that the rules for the bidding had not been established yet. It would all have to be balanced against cost effectiveness.

OTHER ITEMS

There were no other items introduced.

ITEMS TO PRESENT TO WCROC

- Make a presentation on what happened at the Commissioners Court as well as today's presentation to them.
- Robert Ramirez suggested that the enthusiasm of the design revisions should be emphasized.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

- A representative of Marshall Builders Exchange asked if it was too soon to know if all the phases would be CMAR. Mr. Mitchell indicated it was too soon to know.
- Bob Rivard asked about how the Dollar General came to be considered and what the real estate transaction is and how long it will take to be approved. Kerry Averyt, SARA's Project Manager, stated that the transaction is being negotiated with SARA, the owner,

the tenant and the County. They are confident that it will happen, but it is not an established fact.

ADJOURN

Andi Rodriguez moved and Giorgio Colussi seconded the motion to adjourn, which was approved at 10:30 a.m.