

**Alameda Creek Watershed Center in Sunol & Grounds Restoration
Planning Meeting**

***Sunol Yard Conference Room
November 1, 2013
10 a.m.***

Meeting Notes

Attendees:

Irv Tiessen	Jenny Rigby, The Acorn Group
Diane Tiessen	Tim Ramirez, SFPUC, Natural Resources and Lands Management
Connie DeGrange	Neal Fujita, SFPUC Natural Resources and Lands Management
Mary Marshall	Carla Schultheis, SFPUC Natural Resources and Lands Management
Jim O’Laughlin	Bryan Dessaure, SFPUC Project Management Bureau
Molly Barnes	Emily Powell, SFPUC, Sunol Regional Communications
Rich Cimino	Betsy L. Rhodes, SFPUC, Sunol Regional Communications
Jim Townsend	Laura Page, SFPUC Arts and Educational Initiatives
Dan Reasor	Susan Pontious, SF Public Arts Commission
Lynn Kozma	Mary Chou, SF Public Arts Commission
Aspen Kvicala	
Ron Smith	
Rick Flynn	
Tom Harland	
Solveig Shearer	
Ann Dowling	

Paul DeFreitas, City and County of SF

- I. Review of progress to date, schedule Overview – Bryan Dessaure
 - a. The project recently completed Phase I Civic Design Review approval for the Watershed Center.
 - b. The Project is at 10% design at this juncture.
 - c. Environmental review has re-started. The SF Planning Department anticipates a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project.
 - d. Anticipated schedule:
 - i. Completion of CEQA (environmental review) and design by the end of 2014.
 - ii. Bid process to secure contractor follow (approximately six months)
 - iii. Construction anticipated to start in summer 2015. Construction for both the proposed Sunol Yard and the Watershed Center would take 18 months.

III. Overview of Updated Design and Interpretive Plans for the future Watershed Center by Paul De Freitas, Building Design & Construction, Department of Public Works and Jenny Rigby, The Acorn Group. Please see the presentation at sfwater.org/sunolvalley. ***Click on the Watershed Center link and scroll down to the information from the meeting of November 1, 2013.***

IV. Overview of Public Art Process for Watershed Center by Laura Page, Mary Chou, and Susan Pontious. ***Please see the presentation at sfwater.org/sunolvalley. Click on the Watershed Center link and scroll down to the information from the meeting of November 1, 2013.***

V. Discussion and Questions

Community Input and Public outreach

- a. There were concerns about whether the community's input has been included in this process.
 - Staff responded that the current design represents direct input from the community at the more than 8 meetings that have been convened with the Sunol Water Temple Planning and Preservation Association and other community stakeholders. The mutually agreed upon format was for input to be given to the SFPUC through the group as one single set of directions to staff that everyone could be satisfied with. Also it was noted that the community members in the room review designs and concepts before SFPUC management or the Commission or even staff.
- b. People questioned whether there will be environmental scoping meetings.
 - SFPUC responded that the community will be notified of the environmental review process and will be given every opportunity to comment – both in writing and in person at a hearing of some kind.
- c. One attendee asked if any trees would be removed from the site during construction. Paul clarified that we are not aware of very many trees and brush currently exist at the site. We currently do not anticipate removing any trees during construction of the center at that location.

Access to Alameda Creek

- d. Several attendees pointed out that they would like to see access to the Creek, and access to the confluence of the Arroyo de La Laguna and Alameda Creek as part of the design and planning for the center.
 - Access to the Creek is important, and it will be included in the planning of the outdoor elements to the Center, likely in the Picnic area. Access to the confluence specifically will not be considered at this first phase of the construction, design, and planning. However, it could be included in future planning efforts.

Indoor Elements

- e. Will the walls in the entry area be as smooth as depicted, or will there be boulders, or something?
 - We have not reached that point in the design, yet. We do plan on having some sort of texture on those surfaces, but what specifically, we are not sure, yet.
- f. Some people very much liked the semi-immersive alcoves. They asked if the interpretive elements were already completely designed. Will there be room for input?
 - These are concepts only at this juncture. We are still very early in design and there will be plenty of time for input as the process moves forward.

- g. It was suggested that one of the alcoves suggest the sacredness of water, per the ancient Greek and Roman ideal.
 - This is very important, and will absolutely be part of the interpretive plan. Right now we envision it not inside at the alcoves, but outside near temple itself. The idea of the niches is to depict the evolution of the human relationship to watersheds over time.
- h. Conference Room – can it be used for meetings of various local groups?
 - Yes, there will be a multi-purpose room, likely with a small kitchen, where community groups can meet.
- i. What is the size of that room?
 - 1,200 square feet currently.
- l. There were comments that the experience should be outdoors and not indoors, about the need for children to get their “hands dirty,” to back up any indoor exhibits with outdoor reinforcement. Some kids have never even seen a waterway like Alameda Creek.
 - Jenny absolutely agreed, and stated that we will have failed if people come to the Watershed Center and do not go outside. There is a great deal planned for the outdoor areas in the way of interpretive and other experiences. School groups would go inside for orientation only and head straight out of doors. The center is supposed to be a portal for the outdoor experience. Because the design and interpretive are still so conceptual, that these elements have not been fully fleshed out, yet.

Access to the Nearby Quarry

- j. A few people suggested that some sort of access to the quarry be designed into the design concept. Irv Tiessen spoke with Hanson about access for public groups, and the idea was enthusiastically received.
 - We originally looked at a tower concept as originally suggested by the Association. The tower would have to have been 150 feet tall to see into the nearby quarry pit. We will see about a possible arrangement with Hanson to see if providing access to an overlook of the quarry is possible. However, it will not affect the overall planning and conceptual design of the center at this juncture. It can run on a parallel path.
- k. How does the East Bay Regional Park District Trail Plan fit into this project?
 - Jim Townsend answered that there will be a likely connection to the Vargas Plateau to the Watershed Center along the ridgeline. Other potential connections could happen along the floor of Niles Canyon. A study to look at these details and possibilities for trails is starting soon.
- l. Suggest adding in some sort of small structure at the end of your allees (alley ways in a garden or park bordered by trees or bushes) in your conceptual plan for outdoor viewing and enjoyment during wet weather.
 - That is a very interesting idea... we will look into that.
- m. Someone asked about the plinths (raised platforms) at the ends of the alleys, and whether or not they'll be restored.

→ We are not sure at this time.

n. If the budget cannot support all of the concepts as proposed, will you have to prioritize the various elements?

→ We hope we can get this fully budgeted...

Public Arts Process

o. How will local artists find out about this?

→ We will make sure the information gets to you. We will send out an e-mail to the entire list.

p. What if an interested artist does not have the 10 samples of previous work? You are excluding a lot of people in that.

→ We wanted to make sure that the recipient of these monies has a lot of experience in this regard and is an accomplished artist.

q. It was suggested that perhaps other portions of the center be devoted to the work of younger and emerging artists as part of temporary exhibits, as opposed to the full art installation.

→ We will definitely want to promote that idea.

r. The \$440,000 would be used for construction of the Center?

→ No, it is a completely separate funding source.

s. Judging by your funding and your comments, you are looking at hiring just one artist, then?

→ A lot may depend upon the response. We would be looking at a smaller number of artists, though.

General Parting Comments

t. Many expressed their appreciation for the work done on the project and the presentation, and the professionalism of the architectural and interpretive designing.

u. A few expressed specific concerns about the long-term planning and dissatisfaction with the process.

v. Some stated that there is a lot of good work going on with the community process and the project.

VI. Next steps/follow up items

→ Staff will post the staff presentations on the webpage.

→ We will convene another meeting together in the New Year.

→ The group could log on to sfwater.org/sunolvalley and review the background documents posted there that contributed to today's discussions.