
Minutes City Council's Neighborhood Parks Rehabilitation & Maintenance Committee February 18, 2009

Rehabilitation & Maintenance Committee held on Wednesday, February 18, 2009, 3:00 p.m., in the 3rd Floor Conference Room, Tempe City Hall, 31 E. 5th Street, Tempe, Arizona.

Committee Members Present:

Councilmember Joel Navarro, Chair
Councilmember Mark Mitchell

City Staff Present:

Kathy Gasperich, Comm Rel
Andy Goh, Dep Pub Wrks Mgr
Jan Hort, City Clerk
Bob Pohlit, CIP Coordinator
Denise Rentschler, Community Outreach & Marketing
Sam Thompson, Dep Mgr, Parks
Shauna Warner, Neighborhood Svcs Dir
Robert Yabes, Prin Planner

Guests Present:

Ken Caldwell, Lands Arch. WLB Group

Councilmember Navarro called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances

Ken Caldwell, WLB Group, stated that he is working with Kent Clayton for an upcoming City project for right-of-way landscape and gateway definition to the City.

Agenda Item 2 – Review of Minutes

The minutes from the December 17, 2008, were accepted.

Agenda Item 3 – Daley Park Pathway near Railroad Tracks

Robert Yabes summarized that one of the difficulties with the Daley Park connection on the north side of the park is acquisition of right-of-way within the rail alignment. If we want to open a pedestrian crossing on the rail, we have to close one. The railroad considers that track to be one of the busiest in the region. They prefer crossing only where there are gates. For the City to have a path, a minimum of 16 feet of rights-of-way would be required, and 20 feet would be preferred.

Councilmember Navarro asked about the sidewalks between Baseline and Priest.

Mr. Yabes stated that the rights-of-way were taken from the development and that path was built by the development itself. Right now, the City is connecting Tempe Canal on that end.

Councilmember Navarro added that there is a north/south rail line and we already have a sidewalk next to that area. His thought was whether that sidewalk has the potential to be widened to make it more bike-friendly or pedestrian-friendly to tie into the pathway of the canal system. That would provide connectivity from the canal all the way to downtown.

Mr. Yabes responded that the City is building a path north along the Tempe Canal almost to University.

Councilmember Navarro asked about the connectivity from Western Canal down to the rail line at Kyrene, and having that connectivity down that open space. How much distance can we use to either make it more bike or pedestrian-friendly? Is there another open space path to get from the south Tempe area to the downtown area?

Councilmember Mitchell added that years ago there was discussion to go along with the Western Canal where it comes along Kiwanis Park and then see what we could do to have a linear park along the railroad tracks north, across US 60, to behind Tempe St. Luke's and then connect to Town Lake. Apparently, the railroad is not willing to talk about anything.

Councilmember Navarro asked if the concern was distance.

Mr. Yabes responded that on the south side, past Baseline, there is some larger right-of-way. The City has to buy the rights-of-way in order to use them. Western Canal will be developed all the way to Arizona Mills. There are connections possible either going down Country Club Way or College Avenue. Right now, the City is building the longest bike path, about 6 miles, along Western Canal. That has been funded by the federal government and it will connect to Hardy. There is a bike lane on Hardy. We will continue to try to talk to the railroad.

Councilmember Navarro asked if our lobbyist could do that.

Mr. Yabes agreed. The difficulty is in talking to the railroad.

Councilmember Navarro added that the goal is to determine a route that is going to get publicized as a big connectivity from whatever connection off the Western Canal space, either bike path down Hardy, or bike path down College Avenue, and how do we make that a more attractive usage.

Mr. Yabes added that the City is not far behind Phoenix on pathways. Phoenix has many staff members to write grants, where the City only has three.

DIRECTION: Robert Yabes will return with Eric Iwersen to show future overall path system.

Agenda Item 4 – Connection Improvements Between Collector Streets & Parks

Robert Yabes stated that he will make a future presentation on how the City approaches the projects. College Avenue is a good example. Hardy between University and Broadway is another example for streetscape. Streetscape improvements can only be done in one mile increments.

Sam Thompson stated that the Parks Department has a master plan and part of that plan calls for working with transit on connectivity with the parks and bike paths. Some in place are the Country Club Way from Cole Park to Rotary, and the golf course pathways which are all bike paths connecting to the golf course. Staff is aggressively working on those plans.

Mr. Yabes showed how the parks are connected. There will be entrances that will link Western Canal to Kiwanis.

Councilmember Navarro stated that we already have that connection down the Kyrene Canal to the Ken McDonald Golf Course and down further to between Warner and Ray.

Mr. Yabes added that another example is the Crosscut Canal with a path just north of Hallman Park and there is a plan to extend that.

Councilmember Navarro asked if we have some sort of connectivity, for example, with Harelson Park. Do we plan a route that would take someone to the Kyrene Canal, to the Western Canal, the big paths, from our parks or the parks next to the path? Will we try to mitigate some connectivity maybe a little off the beaten path?

Mr. Yabes stated that for Stroud Park, it was suggested by the residents that we have that connectivity in there. If we do some improvements along those areas, we will try to accommodate what the residents want. Parks are a major destination for the neighborhoods.

Councilmember Navarro stated that when we do redevelopment on our parks, could connectivity be tied into it? For example, Corbell Park is not too far from the Western Canal. Is there some way to get public input to see if they would like to see a more visible bath path route toward that canal?

Mr. Pohlit added that staff is doing that. He cited two examples. With Stroud Park, the corner where the connection is being made actually had a problem with a dark corner next to an apartment complex and there were a number of service calls with police. When this is built, it will provide light and it will take that dark area from the park. Also, at Hallman Park where we are planning the renovation, we are working with Eric Iwersen regarding the Crosscut Canal project, wherein they could not go along the original pathway that leads back to Phoenix Papago Park because of ADA issues. Instead, they will come into the park itself and make their connection to Tempe Papago Park through Hallman Park. We are doing joint use of a pathway. Also there is an observation overlook area that will be jointly used for both the pathway and for the park users.

Councilmember Navarro added that even with the parks that are further from the main connectivity, how do we utilize existing sidewalks and improve those to make that connectivity more pleasant to how we get around?

Mr. Pohlit responded that concerning Hallman Park, the neighborhood has had considerable input. Mr. Iwersen made a presentation to the North Tempe Neighborhood Association last month wherein they had input with regard to even saying they didn't like his bridge design. In Stroud Park, staff met with representatives of the HOA and members of the neighborhood association, and they provided input on the problem area of the park.

Councilmember Navarro added that neighborhood input is important on park connectivity when doing park improvements. He suggested meeting with neighbors and HOA's to get input.

Councilmember Mitchell added that the City has done a good job as shown by the project list. With the Western Canal improvements coming up, it will be easy to get to the north side of the City via Hardy. From the east side of Tempe, it is also possible along Country Club Way to Alameda and Alameda to College. That is a pleasant route. He asked Shauna Warner if this has been an issue with the neighborhoods regarding the connectivity.

Shauna Warner stated that sometimes neighbors don't want to be connected. Many of the pathways are behind peoples' homes and there is the fear of the unknown. The bicycle users are different than the park users, so staff isn't hearing a lot about connectivity from the park users.

Councilmember Navarro suggested asking how a neighborhood likes their connectivity. It is probably as simple as that.

Ms. Warner suggested asking that question during the master planning process.

Councilmember Mitchell added that the connectivity is already there. The question is whether there is a way to enhance it.

Agenda Item 5 – Community Gardens

Sam Thompson summarized that numerous inquiries have been received from citizens regarding establishment of small community gardens in the parks. Staff is referring those questions to Bob Pohlit and Shauna Warner. The time to address that is during the master planning process. There is also a concern about large-scale community gardens in the 2.5 acre range. We don't have space available for that.

Councilmember Mitchell added that the City of Long Beach, California, has a community garden program. He suggested formulating a definition of a community garden. He also suggested looking at the National League of Cities to see how other cities handle it.

Mr. Thompson stated that some research has already been done, as well as working with ASU College of Sustainability.

Councilmember Mitchell added that there is a large garden on some vacant land on Guadalupe and Rural.

Ms. Warner stated that they have had inquiries from residents about planting community gardens in their alleys. Tucson allows that.

Mr. Pohlit added that currently they have a request from the Mitchell Park Neighborhood Association to apply for a neighborhood grant for a community garden in Mitchell Park. He believed that they were envisioning a fenced plot where people could be assigned a specific space and they would be responsible for that section. The Neighborhood Association would administer it.

Ms. Warner added that the problem with community gardens is that you have to have that sustainable effort in the neighborhood. Private property can regulate, but public space is open to all. Roof rats also like gardens.

Councilmember Navarro asked staff to determine if there is a possibility of any joint projects with some of the parks and schools for community gardens.

Agenda Item 6 – Trees for Tempe

Denise Rentschler provided an update for the Trees for Tempe program.

- Upcoming events
 - Partnering with Tempe Cares on March 7th.
 - Over 100 trees will be planted around the Tempe Town Lake area including Giuliano Park, Tempe Center for the Arts, and Jaycee Park, as well as the right-of-way on Fifth Street from Hardy to Priest.
 - SRP contributed up to \$17K to cover the trees. They donated 49 trees for the Town Lake Marina.
 - Mountain States donated 30 15-gallon trees for the 5th Street right-of-way.
 - Arbor Day 2009 – April 24th
 - Working with TD3 and Kyrene School District to develop tree planting activity.
 - Scales Technical Academy is fundraising \$600 for 4 - 24" box trees.
 - Proclamation from the Mayor.

- 2 additional partners – Intel and P Croissant.
- Distinctions/Awards
 - Tree City USA – Certification for 2009
- Results
 - Value of \$60,988
 - Volunteer Service - \$2,693 (number of volunteers x number of hours worked at \$17.10/hour)
 - Contributions - \$25,850
 - Media - \$32,445 (TV - \$18,300; Print - \$14,145)
 - Impressions – 454,930

Ms. Rentschler continued with the Adopt-a-Park program. The Trees for Tempe is a one-time volunteer opportunity, but the Adopt-a-Park program gives the residents another opportunity for an on-going project.

- Adopt-a-Park
 - Peer City Costs
 - Unable to obtain costs for programs – implementation and on-going.
 - Neither accurate comparisons for budgeting purposes.
 - Projected Implementation Costs
 - Parks Department is assembling a tool and supply trailer for large projects
 - Provide volunteers with T-shirts, possibly through sponsorship
 - Name plate on plaque after 60 hours of service
 - Next Steps
 - Non-Profit Status
 - Create a Friends of Tempe Parks and Recreation, an umbrella for Trees for Tempe with tax write-off for contributions
 - Upon Adopt-a-Park program approval
 - Research hard costs and partnerships
 - Work with Neighborhoods for Adoption Drive

Agenda Item 7 – Future Agenda Items

Next meeting will be in April.

- Update on connectivity with neighborhoods
- Update on Warner/I-10 ADOT Pit
- Svob Park Master Plan

Meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Prepared by: Connie Krosschell
Reviewed by: Sam Thompson

Jan Hort
City Clerk