Steering Committee Meeting Notes
Date: 2/16/17

To: Cincere Eades, Denver Parks and Recreation
From: Gretchen Wilson, Dig Studio
Subject: Heron Pond Master Plan Steering Committee Meeting #1 Notes

Attendees: DPR – Cincere Eades, Project Manager; Dig Studio – Gretchen Wilson; Zoeller Consulting – Lisa Zoeller, Nora Neureiter, Rosa Snyder; NDCC – Michael Sapp Jr., Celia Vanderloop; Leesly Leon

Steering Committee Members:
Community Members: John Zapien, AE, Armando Payan, Katie McKenna (absent), Kristin Cardenas, Vernon Hill, Maria Duran, Yessika Gonzales, Rosa Gaytan, Ray Ruppert
Greenway Foundation: Rachel Steel, Jeff Shoemaker (absent)
Audubon Society of Greater Denver: Polly Reetz (absent)
The Nature Conservancy: Suzanne White (absent)
Adams County: Shannon McDowell
Western Stock Show Association: Liz Adams (CRL Associates)
CSU: Jocelyn Hittle (absent)
Mickey Zeppelin

Meeting Place: Garden Place Academy – 4425 Lincoln St., Denver, CO

Date/Time: February 15, 2017/5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

The following notes are paraphrased:

5:30  Environmental Conditions Presentation (Celia Vanderloop) with Q&A
Celia reviewed the environmental conditions booklet. She discussed the benefits of parks as well as other parks in the City that have been developed in areas with environmental concerns and the reality of managing contaminants to make parks safe for people. She reviewed the maps showing where the different contaminants are present on the site.

Questions/comments from Steering Committee members:

1. Vernon Hill: It seems like we can manage the problems on the site and still come up with a great park design that will be of huge benefit to our community.
2. John Zapien: Stressed the importance to him of keeping the area a “Natural Area”.
3. AE: Would like to know the costs for full cleanup, just so we have a starting point.
4. Yessika Gonzales: Asked Celia for more information on what Cadmium, lead and other contaminants are and how they are harmful, especially to children, and how they could be managed.
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5. Armando: Asked where the lead contamination comes from. Celia explained that lead contamination has many sources including ASARCO’s smelting operation, as well as (now banned) lead in gasoline, paint, and pipes among other sources.

6. John Zapien: Would like to know about the small pond to the west of Heron Pond. Cincere responded that it is a Denver Public Works storm water management pond. Celia will confirm that this pond never received/contained ASARCO wastewater discharge.

7. Vernon Hill: asked why this site was never designated as an official Superfund site. Celia responded that while a law suit was filed by Colorado under CERCLA (federal Superfund law), a consent agreement was reached, the site was cleaned, and the EPA approved the cleanup. In 1998, the EPA did further environmental study south of I-70 and determined that environmental cleanup was necessary south of I-70 and east of Washington Street- those areas were cleaned by EPA as a part of the Vasquez Boulevard/I-70 Superfund Site Operable Unit1.

6:15 Site Constraints (Cincere Eades)

1. Cincere presented the conservation easement and deed restriction on the Heron Pond/Heller Open Space parcels. We discussed what types of structures could be placed in those areas. Buildings and paved roads and paths will not be permitted, but gravel paths and potentially picnic shelters could be.

2. Cincere presented the Existing Conditions document which covers other site aspects and asked the Steering Committee to review outside of the meeting.

3. Several questions and comments from Steering Committee members:
   - Mickey Zeppelin: who imposed the land use controls? Cincere responded that Open Space rules were imposed and are administered by Denver Parks and Recreation. The conservation easement is overseen by Colorado Open Lands. Colorado Open Lands was involved in the review of the 52nd and Emerson design that developed park concepts for the whole site in 2012.
   - AE encouraged the Steering Committee to think broadly about this site to get beyond merely the management of open space to the recovery of healthy land.
   - Vernon Hill: asked why open land at 52nd and Emerson is not in the master planning boundary. Cincere responded that this land is owned by Denver Public Works Stormwater Enterprise Fund and needs to be designed to manage storm water first, before we design additional passive or active recreational uses.
   - John Zapien: asked if the City still has the community generated ideas from the public input exercises two years ago. Cincere responded that those ideas have been captured in the Existing Conditions document, and would welcome review and comment.

6:30 Public Meeting Format/Housekeeping

- Cincere reminded all about the Public Meeting Feb 22, at Garden Place Academy Gym, 4425 Lincoln St., Denver. AE and Vernon asked that everyone on the committee tell at least 5 people about the meeting and get them to come.
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- Cincere asked people what they thought should be presented and how at the Public Meeting. John Zapien, Vernon Hill, Yessika Gonzales and others agreed that it should be very similar to what was presented tonight, with more information on heavy metals and their potential health impacts as well as a simplified environmental presentation that shows what positive things can be done on this site and to get people excited about improvements here.

- Cincere presented the survey questions that the team has drafted and asked what the Steering Committee thought or if any needed to be added. Cincere will send out to the Steering Committee for their review.

- Mickey felt that the questions should be more specific about how people get to the park, down to what intersection they go through to get there. He also made a point to ask people if they know what a Natural Area is. Cincere agreed that we would add that question and would also add a slide to the existing conditions report on Denver Parks Natural Areas and their management.

- Cincere then asked everyone for their input on what would be best to present or how at the Public meeting next week.

- AE asked that the information gathered at the public meeting be shared with the Steering Committee before the next Steering Committee meeting.

- Vernon mentioned that the 51st Ave Bridge will create great access but it’s really important to decide what happens on either side of that new road. Overall, he was very excited about all the prospects of what we can do with this park regardless of contamination, but he expressed concern about Heron Pond and the groundwater and what we need to do to really make it safe.

- Rachel Steel suggested that we demonstrate how parks with similar challenges have overcome their contamination issues. Perhaps making a case study of Ruby Hill to demonstrate the positive outcome there could inspire community members to dream more.

- Shannon McDowell wanted to be sure there will be kids’ activities at the public meeting so that parents can fully digest the information provided.

- Liz Adams wanted to be sure we present info about connections and accessibility that will come with the National Western campus plans and also wants us to ask people in the survey – what would make people want to come to the park?

- AE wants everyone to commit to bringing 5-10 people to the meeting and reminded everyone that this is a two-sided project that should address both sides of the river. We need to coordinate with what NWC is doing as well as with Washington St. Corridor Planning. This project has a direct relationship to these other projects.

- Maria Duran asked that flyers be sent in Thursday folders to the schools in the neighborhood and Lisa Zoeller replied they will be going out this Thursday.

- Rosa Gaytan wants to be sure we are asking people about their safety concerns for families who do not access the park because of safety.
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- Ray Ruppert wants to be sure we communicate how we are going to manage and clean up the contamination and to address storm water flow.
- Armando wants to make this a smart environmentally sustainable area with wind turbines, solar power, an amphitheater to attract millennials, and other innovative concepts.
- Kristín Cardenas wants us to be sure to ask specifics about safety on the survey and dig deeper. Is it lighting, is it trash, is it homeless people?
- Armando thinks the format of the public meeting is simple. Present what we presented tonight.
- Cincere agreed to have a fact sheet on heavy metals available at the public meeting.
- Mickey thinks that the people element is missing. Is there signage, education? This 80 acres is a major asset to the community and how do we best communicate that to the public? We need to add questions that address the importance of the area as a Natural Area. It needs to be the “soul” of the community and be reflective of the community.
- Next Meeting Date – April 19th, Location is to be determined and will be sent to the group as soon as we have it.

7:15 Wrap up:

Cincere reviewed the “Parking Lot” issues noted during the meeting to see if these issues were addressed or if further follow up was needed. Issues listed were:

- Lead, Cadmium and Arsenic: this issue was discussed during the meeting and it was also agreed that Cincere and Celia would work to have more detailed information at the public meeting on metals contamination on the site.
- 54th and Emerson: Cincere provided more information about this topic after the meeting: Cincere responded that the pond is a storm water management pond. Celia will confirm that this pond never received/contained ASARCO waters from the Asarco groundwater treatment system. The pond received storm water that had run off of areas that had been contaminated by Asarco, before those areas were cleaned up in the 1990s.
- Gas station nearby and possible activity that goes below the water table: this was a concern by Ray Rupert that is somewhat beyond the scope of the Heron Pond project but he was directed to speak with Cincere and Celia to clarify what his concerns are and how to address them.
- Explore the costs to fully clean the site vs. the cost to “manage” the existing contamination. Understanding these cost benefits/differences will help the community make decisions: It was agreed that this issue is important and will be addressed as we move through the planning process.
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- Due to time constraints, the Existing Conditions presentation was handed to Steering Committee members and members were encouraged to read the report and contact Cincere with questions or let her know if there are particular aspects that need to be addressed at the next Steering Committee meeting.

The meeting was adjourned and staff remained for individual questions and answers.