Steering Committee Meeting Notes
Date: 4/20/17

To: Cincere Eades, Denver Parks and Recreation
From: Gretchen Wilson, Dig Studio

Subject: Heron Pond Master Plan Steering Committee Meeting #3 Notes

Attendees: DPR – Cincere Eades, Project Manager; Dig Studio – Gretchen Wilson, Laurel Raines; Zoeller Consulting – Lisa Zoeller, Nora Neureiter; NDCC – Michael Sapp Jr., Sloane Nystrom
Steering Committee Members:
  Community Members: John Zapien, AE, Armando Payan, Vernon Hill (absent)
  Katie McKenna, Maria Duran (absent), Rosa Gaytan (absent), Yessica Gonzales (absent)
  Greenway Foundation: Rachel Steel, Jeff Shoemaker (absent)
  Audubon Society of Greater Denver: Polly Reetz
  The Nature Conservancy: Suzanne White
  Adams County: Shannon McDowell
  Western Stock Show Association: Liz Adams (CRL Associates) (absent)
  CSU: Jocelyn Hittle (absent)
  Mickey Zeppelin (absent)
Community Attendees: Ray Ruppert, Nola Miguel, Maria Campos

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

Date/Time: April 19, 2017/5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

The following notes are paraphrased:

5:40 Welcome and introduction to topics of meeting #3:
  Survey Results
  Vision, Goals, & Objectives
  Planning for upcoming meetings and event

5:45 Cincere presented the results of the survey taken at Public Meeting #1 and online. Gretchen Wilson indicated that the survey results will drive the preliminary ideas for a unified Heron Pond/Heller Open Space/Northside Park. Some questions arose:

Katie McKenna: Did all the preferred activities on the survey show up on the survey result list? A: Yes, although disc golf was a write in.

Nola Miguel: Disc golf ended up ranking at the top of the list. Do the disc golf proponents live in the neighborhood? A: ½ live in the neighborhood, ½ do not.
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6:00 Cincere presented the draft prioritized activities to be presented on boards at the May 13 Picnic in the Park. The nine prioritized activities are: trails and dog walking, nature viewing, recreation, river access, shade, flexible lawn space, signage/way finding, running and cycling, and environmental education. Picnic attendees will be given 5 stickers each to rank order their preferred activities. Many questions came up:

1. Suzanne White: These are a lot of choices. For example, would assume that signage is already a part of the overlying master plan elements and not a separate amenity. Would maybe suggest cutting that to get real preferences for activities or program. Also, some choices seem indistinguishable. For example, are nature viewing and environmental education the same? Some of these priorities are programming elements versus design elements. Maybe we can break out priorities into ‘design’ and ‘uses’, or ‘land use’ and ‘functional use’.

2. John Zapien said these choices look like the “same old stuff”. He mentioned an article in the Denver Post with a quote by happy Haynes about the future of parks and said we should read it. We have a wonderful opportunity not to squander it on traditional kinds of things. The “diet” that we get from the City is the same as what we’ve been spoon-fed before. He encouraged members to think outside the box. Civic Center is a beautiful park but this weekend it’s going to be trashed. We don’t need to follow that pattern. We’re not bound to traditional stuff.

6:15 Vision Goals, Objectives (Cincere asked that everyone give one word to describe what their vision is for the master plan of the park)

1. Armando - modernization, sustainability, technology so that the park will pay for itself
2. Ray - tourist attraction
3. Rachel - a natural refuge
4. Suzanne - usable natural space connected to the neighborhood
5. Nola - wellness and nature
6. Maria - safe
7. Katie - a community asset
8. Shannon - wildlife
9. Polly - biodiversity/restoration
10. John - opportunity
11. AE - regeneration

6:30 Vision Statement ideas

1. A safe community space that will provide refuge for people and nature
2. Multiple opportunities for the community
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3. John Zapien: we have a gem in the rough. The area has been mistreated for people and for nature.

4. Enhance the quality of life for all

5. AE: A regenerative natural refuge protecting biodiversity and community wellness in nature, supporting opportunities for safe and sustainable kinship of wildlife and community life.

6. Katie: need to meet unmet needs in the GES community. This is a large amount of land in City of Denver. How do we incorporate the community’s basic needs?

7. Cincere stated that she’d like to create one more meeting to talk all about the redevelopment parcel. This is an important topic that needs more conversation with this group.

8. John: Maybe add "enhance cultural, educational & economic opportunities for the community." Have people in the neighborhood help with revegetation, etc. so that they will be invested in the park.

9. Maria said safety means not only safety from human activity but safety from wildlife activity too. She said she heard from a couple who went out to the park to take a relaxing walk, but they encountered loose, mean looking dogs and saw a dead coyote as well. The park needs people looking around and cleaning up stuff like this to make it safe and attractive. The junkyard and recycling centers are a problem too. How will the plan integrate natural areas for refuge within these existing uses? Safety goes beyond just other bad people but also includes public health.

10. Nola asked about the sewer lines and what could possibly be done about the smell.

11. John suggested the methane gas be captured and used for energy for something positive.

12. Rachel said it should we should add that it should be an inviting space.

13. Ray would like ‘regional attraction’ in the vision statement.

14. Nola said we should say, an “attractive destination/sanctuary for birds’ nests, bees, plants for butterfly migration”.

15. Cincere said Polly has been sending her bird counts at Heron Pond and she will share that with the group.

16. AE pointed out that there is malaise in the neighborhood, the park plan needs to be seen as adding to the neighborhood and not another thing that is being taken away.

6:45 Goals and Objectives: one by one we reviewed the goals that came out of the previous planning efforts and discussed whether they were still relevant or needed modifications:

1. Goal 1 of existing goals: Premier Destination Natural Area (and Open Space)
   a. All agreed this was good, but someone suggested adding open space
   b. Objectives suggested for this goal were: provide an ecological learning center; sustainable energy use; create a migratory bird sanctuary.

2. Goal 2 of existing goals: Integrate water quality into natural area
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a. It needs to be integrated with the park and usable
b. It could be an educational opportunity

3. Shannon asked if it is the goal of community members to bring in people to a destination park from outside the community.
4. AE: needs to be a local amenity but attractive to outsiders and could be an example of "heritage tourism".
5. John: mentioned gentrification and he’s not sure it’s a bad thing. Some of it needs to happen, it’s a natural process, but doesn’t want to see what happened to Highlands happen here. We have a mess, we need some of these things not only for the community but also not a space that gets overrun by large events.
6. Cincere: large events would not be permitted if that’s what the community wants to set as a rule.
7. Goal 3 of existing goals: Balance human interaction with resource protection
   a. Have controls on what is permitted
8. Goal 4 of existing goals: Create a better Site Identity
   a. AE likes poetry in cement
   b. Identify additional access point
   c. Enhance the signage of existing access points
9. Goal 5 of existing goals: minimize environmental impacts
   a. Katie suggested adding minimizing health impacts from environmental issues here as well. She also suggested adding a more all-encompassing safety goal.
10. Goal 6 of existing goals: everyone agreed this goal could be removed. It was 'Integrate all parcels to be one united space'. No need - the Master Plan process is underway.
11. Goal 7 of existing goals: Restore and enhance native plant communities: keep but add enhance
12. Goal 8 of existing goals: Embrace and enhance access to the South Platte River: keep
   a. Needs more discussion or thought by members as to how.
13. Goal 9 of existing goals: connect residents to the natural area
   a. Through better site entries
   b. From Platte River trail
   c. Also through programming and ownership by the community
14. Goal 10 of existing goals: Support recreation needs and public health
   a. AE: where are the findings on the equipment used at Stapleton rec center
   b. Cincere: maybe add something for all ages/ multi-generational
   c. Katie: optimize opportunities to meet unmet needs in GES community. John Zapien added unmet needs are: educational, economic, and cultural.
   d. Nola: there is no goal about education. One should be added.

7:10 Schedule Updates
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May 13th event in the park – Please hand out flyers and spread the word around.

May 23 - Steering committee meeting #4 will address Water Quality and concept planning.

June 21 Steering Committee meeting #5 – 3 draft alternative plans and redevelopment parcel

July 19 Public Open House – 3 final alternative plans. The meeting was adjourned and staff remained for individual questions and answers.