

DOWNTOWN LINKS CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (DLCAC)
DECK PARK REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 11, 2013

*Accepted and Approved by the Downtown Links CAC
Deck Park Review Subcommittee on April 15, 2013*

FROM: TDOT Project Manager Tom Fisher

DECK PARK SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair, Daniela Diamente, Dunbar Spring Neighborhood Association
Kylie Walzak, Tucson-Pima Bicycle Advisory Committee
Christopher Carroll, El Presidio Neighborhood Association
Susan Gamble, Warehouse Arts Management Association

PROJECT TEAM PRESENT:

Tom Fisher, City of Tucson Department of Transportation (TDOT)
Michael Bertram, HDR Engineering, Inc.
Kathy Jirschele, Kaneen Advertising and Public Relations
Laura Mielcarek, Wheat Scharf and Associates
Caryl Clement, Wheat Scharf Associates
Sam Credio, City of Tucson Department of Transportation

DOWNTOWN LINKS CAC MEMBERS PRESENT

Mary Ellen Wooten, Tucson – Pima Arts Council

1. Meeting Called to Order

Meeting called to order at 10:08 a.m. at Wheat Scharf and Associates, 442 N. 6th Avenue, Tucson, AZ
Quorum confirmed

2. Introduction of Committee Members and Staff

Downtown Links CAC Deck Park Review Subcommittee and Project Team Members introduced themselves.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes from February 25, 2013

Motion to approve the minutes of February 25, 2013, with correction, was passed by a voice vote of 4 to 0.

4. Announcements

Sam Credio gave a brief update of the St. Mary's construction project announcing the public should expect delays in the next couple weeks when the contractor closes the intersection of Granada Avenue and St. Mary's Road, followed by the closure of St. Mary's Road between Church and Granada Avenues.

5. Staff Reports and Presentations to DLCAC

Continued Deck Park Concept Presentation

Laura Mielcarek began her presentation with case studies of Park 101 in Los Angeles, CA. Pioneer Square in Portland, OR. and Klyde Warren Park in Dallas TX. There was discussion among the Subcommittee members and audience.

Chris Carroll asked about the weights of structures on some of the case studies compared to what our Deck

Park weight limitations would be. Large trees, grass and large structures are not an option for the 9th Street Deck Park. Responders said that trees and larger structures could be built along the outside perimeter of the park. **Michael Bertram** reminded everyone that the scale of the case studies was much greater than that of our Deck Park.

Chris Carroll agreed, but reiterated that the Deck Park will be limited to hardscape, small planters and some shade structures.

Laura M. asked Tom F. and Mike B. to define the area that can be used for the Deck Park. There was discussion about a property owner to the north of the Deck Park who was possibly working on a land trade with the COT, the boundaries of the UPRR and land use of the property south of the Deck Park.

Tom F. suggested again that the Downtown Links CAC form a Land Use Subcommittee to review the area south of the UPRR that will ultimately be abandoned.

The actual UPRR right-of-way was defined and **Daniela D.** reminded the team, that though we can't touch the UPRR property, the entrance on both sides of the 100' UPRR right-of-way needs to be inviting and attractive.

There was discussion regarding access for Citizens Warehouse and emergency vehicles, along with the potential for event set-up. **Michael B.** reminded the committee that the area is not an island, and that access from Stone Avenue will be available.

Kylie asked if anyone had a case study photograph of a shared bike and pedestrian crossing at an at-grade railroad crossing.

Linda S. (audience member) said that looking at both areas with an overlap is good because success of the area is based on the strength of activities on both sides of the railroad.

Laura M. reviewed the Deck Park functions that were mentioned at the last subcommittee meeting along with additional ideas Wheat Scharf added. The group discussed function of the space and reviewed soil requirements for different types of landscaping to help determine where larger trees could be planted and where shallow-depth plants and or planters would be required.

It was determined that several of the functions were similar and could be combined into the same space, such as farmers markets, performance area, outdoor movie, food truck vendors, functional art that children can play on. This conversation, regarding a playground, brought up the question of whether the COT Department of Parks and Recreation would be involved. **Tom F.** suggested that the members prioritize the functions of the Deck Park. If a playground is one of the priorities, then the city could begin the discussion with Parks and Recreation.

Daniela D. suggested that "a gathering space" is the main function of the Deck Park, so food trucks, farmers market, outdoor movies, performance area and pop-up meeting and reception space are all similar and can be categorized as the first priority for the area. Then the committee can begin to look at the secondary items like skate bowl and hub for bike share program. **Daniela** reminded the group that most of the priority functions are adult oriented and that while it is family friendly, what do children do while they're there?

Daniela thought maybe "functional art" that children could play on, rather than a traditional playground might be an answer to that.

Chris C. said he is very worried about the reality of the limitations of the area. With the number of trains going by, you would not be able to have a Rock concert, much less enjoy an outdoor movie. He also said he wasn't too sure about having a playground that close to the train tracks.

Kylie W. said she made her decision about this area based on the assumption of development. We need to preserve as much open space as possible and based on urban overlay, there will be development in the surrounding area.

Caryl Clements estimates that a very basic park would cost \$300 per square foot.

Chris C. said it is still unclear how the development of Lot 175 and the Rail Road lot will unfold. Right now there is nothing happening in regards to an exchange of property, and so what we're doing is bargaining an expensive piece of surface area for ultimate use by somebody, and we haven't even identified who that is.

Daniela D. said she disagrees. Over the years it has been identified that the neighborhoods will use the facility and what we are trying to do now is plan for the future.

Mary Ellen Wooten wants to know what the plan for the park is. Is it just neighborhoods, a respite for

people on the pedestrian path or is it a larger community that they envision using the park?

Audience member said that the artist's vision for the park was to turn it into "the" place to go. People from out of town would want to go to this park.

Chris C. said if this is going to be the center for the community, where will everyone park? How do you make it a destination? It's taken downtown Tucson thirty years to become a destination. Who takes care of it? Saying the Neighborhood Associations will take care of it is fine, but neighborhoods change and he doesn't think they should be totally relied on.

Kylie W. said she is not worried about what the cost of the Deck Park is. She asked what the cost of the Downtown Links project was and asked what that roadway project was going to do to the vibrancy and connectivity of the downtown neighborhoods. She thinks \$300 a square foot is a small price to pay.

Chris C. said an alternative is to have a bridge that can serve the same purpose as the deck park. At either end of the rail road there is a highly constricted place to go, so there is already a funneling of connection.

Daniela D. said that if he wanted to pursue that farther, they would have to go back to the entire CAC because there has been a vote, and the subcommittee is tasked with talking about a Deck Park. There are strong feelings about a Deck Park, not a bridge. **Daniela** agreed that his concerns about functionality and cost are relevant and they should be addressed.

Chris C. said he is concerned enough that he would go back to the full CAC, but if the subcommittee and the designers could come up with something that is viable and worth the money that will be spent on the Deck then that would be fine.

Linda Samuels (audience member) said the Deck Park is not about access - a successful Deck Park is all about the visual and spatial connectivity otherwise it will bifurcate the neighborhoods.

There was discussion about different Deck Parks around the country and how their functions, based on the communities they serve, were similar or dissimilar in form and function to our Deck Park. There was also conversation about how the bridge over Broadway functioned, and **Daniela** reminded everyone that if we were going to talk bridges, then we needed to go back to the full CAC.

Mike Bertram reminded the subcommittee that the 9th Avenue feasibility report HDR prepared studied the two options being discussed right now. A 42-foot wide bridge and a deck park - with a difference of \$1.5 million dollars between them. Mike reminded them that when he simply posed a question to the full CAC about whether this was where they wanted to spend the money, or was there someplace adjacent or nearby that would provide more functionality the answer was emphatically the 9th Avenue Deck Park. So TDOT moved forward with the acceptance of applying the resources to the deck park.

Daniela D. asked for a straw poll to see if the subcommittee members wanted to move forward with the Deck park, or go back to the CAC and rethink size.

Kylie W. said **Chris Carroll** brings up a valid point.

Chris C. more important is what we are going to do down here (pointing to an area on the map) with this land, and how it will affect the Steinfeld and across the way. Maybe if we went back to a 40 foot bridge, we wouldn't get the million and a half dollars to do anything else with - and if we had a million and a half dollars, we could buy that whole parcel and then really have something to connect with.

Audience member (Carlos Lozano?) Is it possible for the CAC to actually negotiate for another parcel? Do we have to wait until the project is done to see what happens to these remnant parcels?

Michael B. said he believes TDOT is already working trying to see what pieces do remain and how best to go about combining them for redevelopment possibilities. But if we are talking about spending resources that were formerly allocated for a deck park in order to acquire other pieces of property - that would be an integrative piece of this project - and it wouldn't be just buying the property, we would have to do the demolition of the property, clear it, grade it and build whatever amenities are in conjunction with it, and it would be part of the job.

Susan G. said she would like to move forward.

Linda S (audience member) her studio is looking at this, and is working hard to get other experts to look at this issue and thinks that one of the things we're missing is having all of the stakeholders in the room who are neighbor owners and investors in this property. If you want to imagine this as a densely developed area that is going to feed the park, we want to get the people who own the surrounding properties and developers

so that they can say we understand the value in developing this park. Maybe it's not the high line where property values tripled, but we understand this is going to be an amenity and we're going to want to build on this sight.

Kylie W. said people are still complaining about the cost of that project.

Daniela D. said she would like to move forward. The valid concerns need to be incorporated into the cost, and yes we need to bring all the stakeholders into the room, but this committee was based upon that initiative of yes there is value in doing this and that's why we're pursuing this project.

Laura M. said she knows the subcommittee wants a gathering space, art opportunities, some intimate areas and a place to bike with good circulation. **Laura** moved forward to discuss hardscape materials and space requirements. **Laura** also reiterated that they are not providing for a parking lot in the design.

Kylie W. said she does not think parking needs to be a primary concern.

There was discussion regarding the existing available parking in the area.

Laura M. compared the design of the deck park to building a house with basic needs. The design will provide for electricity, lighting, seating, sustainable design features and shade. The north and south ends of the deck park will be integrated into the design.

There was discussion regarding a playground and everyone agreed that it does not need to/should not be regular playground equipment. They would rather see something freeform and artistic that children could play on. Options for hardscape materials were discussed and it was decided that asphalt will not be used because it creates too much heat.

There was discussion of different types of planters, soil, irrigation and plant types. **Mike B.** also made recommendations of where best to locate planters based on deck structure. **Laura M.** also reviewed several types of materials, such as stabilized decomposed granite, pavers, permeable pavers and a rubberized material. After discussion it was agreed the design should utilize a combination of materials. This could also help to differentiate "zones".

MaryEllen W. said there is an opportunity for wonderful ground treatments that an artist could do.

Kylie W. asked about how hot the material gets, especially whatever is used in a play area.

Daniela D. wanted the bike path to be a different material so that it creates a "visual difference" which would cause the rider to slow down.

Carlos Lozano (audience member) said there may be an opportunity to utilize some used bricks from recent demolitions.

Laura M. asked the committee if they wanted to entertain the notion of a noise wall for the 15-foot wide space between the deck park and the rail road. **Michael B.** stated that there will be a significant tradeoff between noise mitigation and view shed impacts. In order to attenuate this particular space from the rail road, it would require a 12 – 15 foot tall structure.

Susan G. said some of the images of walls were more open or trellis like and were much more appealing and she preferred them to a solid structure mainly because a 15-foot solid structure creates a barrier and it would bifurcate the neighborhoods.

Michael B. said that since the wall would be a single structure it would not provide noise mitigation. Sound would wrap around either end of the structure.

Daniela D. said that while a noise wall was something the neighborhoods originally wanted, they were not armed with the information **Mike Bertram** just provided them.

Linda S. (audience member) said there may actually be an interest in the train.

There was discussion regarding possible integration of the train with observation decks, the public art could tie into the train and there may also be some educational opportunities.

Chris C. asked what the minimum safety requirements were. **Mike B.** said a six-foot pedestrian rail would be the minimum requirement for the rail bridge. The deck park rail would be greater than 42 inches.

There was discussion of different possibilities that could be utilized for walls, screens and functions of the sound wall.

Laura M. reviewed the opportunities for integrated artwork

Mary Ellen W. reviewed the Public Art program and how different types of art could be integrated into the Deck Park. There could be vertical and or horizontal surfaces; Freestanding art that could be interactive or

non-interactive. There is also an opportunity for temporary artwork. **Mary Ellen W.** also talked about the allocation of the remaining Public Art budget and the potential art locations and opportunities within the entire Downtown Links project area. **Mary Ellen W.** announced the request from the Barraza family regarding artwork within the Downtown Links project limits.

There will be a call to artist with an open competitive bid.

Kylie W. said we should invite the Sculpture Resource Center to attend our next CAC meeting.

Laura M. asked if the design, so far, for the bicycle and pedestrian circulation was what the committee was envisioning.

Daniela D. asked again about the maintenance of the facility. She said we still haven't received an answer and as we move forward with functionality of the Deck Park, we will need an answer.

Chris C. thinks we should bring everyone who owns property nearby to a meeting because the Deck Park is a good amenity for their property. We want to promote good things happening. **Chris** thinks it will need heavy duty investment from several different directions to make it work.

6. Next Steps

Items for Future Meetings

- Prepare list of Stakeholders to attend. **Daniela D.** suggested businesses and landowners in the nearby area; neighbors and tenants; and experts in water harvesting.

There was extensive discussion on whether the design of the Deck Park should be further along before we bring stakeholders into the room. It was decided that stakeholders would be invited when the design plans were further along, but before they were final.

Confirm Future Meeting Dates

Laura from Wheat Scharf Associates said she would need time to consult with her staff before she could determine when they could be ready for the next meeting. She will coordinate with Kathy Jirschele, who will then let the subcommittee know the date of the next meeting.

7. Call to the Audience

None

8. Adjournment at 12:16 p.m.