

Florida Canyon Enhancement Planning
Notes, Workshop 1
November 15, 2018, 6:00pm to 8:00pm
Balboa Park Club Santa Fe Room, San Diego
2144 Pan American Rd W., San Diego, CA 92101



Stakeholder Attendees

Facilitators

Eric Bowlby- Executive Director, San Diego Canyonlands
Andy Spurlock- Spurlock Landscape Associates
Brad Lents- Spurlock Landscape Associates
Miranda Hyldahl- San Diego Canyonlands

Florida Canyon Stakeholders

Lisa Cumper, Jamul Indian Village (JIV)
Leslie Yu, Friends of Balboa Park
Vicki Estrada, Estrada Land Planning
David Zajac, Navy Base San Diego
Michael Ruiz, City of San Diego, Parks and Recreation Department
Ranger John Anderson, City of San Diego, Parks and Recreation Department
John Bolthouse, Friends of Balboa Park
Sean Cahall
Alan Bennett
Kate Callen, SoNo Neighborhood Alliance
René Smith
Michael Connolly
Jackie Higgins, Balboa Park Conservancy
Arya Ziyhamin
Carrie Schneider, SDCL President
Chelsi Sparti, North Park Planning Committee
Lizzie/Lucy Warren, Friends of Balboa Park

1. Stakeholder Introductions and Introduction to the CEP Process:

- Canyon Enhancement Planning (CEP) Brief History (**Please see attached “Introduction”**)
 - Stakeholder Introductions
 - Vicki Estrada: landscape architect, created the 1980 Balboa Park Master Plan
 - Andy Spurlock: landscape architect, on the Canyon Enhancement Planning (CEP) committee, worked on the Florida Canyon Master Plan in 1975
 - Brad Lents: urban planner and landscape architect, experience with Community Plan Updates throughout the City of San Diego, has worked with San Diego Canyonlands (SDCL), North Park resident, working on the City of San Diego Parks Master Plan Update

- Alan Bennett: native plant steward, Florida Canyon area volunteer, recommends website posting of original Florida Canyon plans so the process will not be starting from ground zero
 - René Smith: interested party
 - Sean Cahall: homeowner nearby, uses Florida Canyon daily, loves the canyon, stakeholder
 - David Zajac: community planning liaison from Navy Base San Diego
 - Lisa Cumper: Kumeyaay
 - Kate Callen: SoNo Neighborhood Alliance
 - Lizzie/Lucy Warren: from Friends of Balboa Park
 - Leslie Yu: from Friends of Balboa Park
 - John Bolthouse: from Friends of Balboa Park
 - John Anderson: City of San Diego Park Ranger
 - Michael Ruiz: Grounds Maintenance Manager for City of San Diego Parks and Recreation, community member, uses canyon
 - Michael Connolly: with Campo Indian reservation
- 1) Build Stewardship Groups, 2) Assemble Existing Conditions Maps, 3) Outreach and Stakeholder Planning Workshops, Create Enhancement Action Plan, Seek Support, Funding and Permits, Execute Action Plans/Projects
 - Displayed Switzer Canyon Action Plan as an example of what the process will produce

2. Opportunities and Constraints

- Public lands: City Open Space, City Park Land, Street Right of Way (ROW) other land owned or managed by other public entities such as utility departments, Caltrans, County, etc.;
 - Florida Canyon is in the MHPA, which is a promise to state and federal agencies that we will preserve our biodiversity of species
 - Displayed the Florida Canyon Vegetation Communities Map, this shows the plant communities found in the canyon, including native and nonnative plants
 - Displayed the Switzer Restoration and Trails Maps as examples of the outcome of the CEP process
 - Displayed the Balboa Park Master Plan map of Florida Canyon, the plan proposes to close Florida Drive and create a bicycle and pedestrian path in its place
- Does not involve private property although private property owners are important stakeholders, and, if interested and willing can involve their land; The plan can make recommendations for acquisition of land;
- In addition to the City's Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL) Regulations, there are numerous Governmental Regulatory Agencies, and Non-Profits that are essentially partners in protecting and restoring our environmental resources.

3. Canyonlands Enhancement Plan Goals:

- Balance conservation of resources with open space enjoyment and nature education opportunities, Florida Canyon is within the City's Multiple Habitat Planning Area;

- Provide public access to nature and connections to other trails or key destinations;
- Incorporate recreation in ways that are compatible with natural resources.
- Goals for Florida Canyon in Balboa Park East Mesa Precise Plan are identical to these goals

4. Stakeholder Brief Comments

- Eric Bowlby: SDCL is interested in protecting the canyon natural resource values: biodiversity, water filtration, recreation, access to nature and education opportunities.
- Alan Bennett: has been volunteering in Balboa Park for 13 years, has read work from Vicki, interested in the dedication and designation of Balboa Park as a wilderness resource, it was originally a gift to the people, 153 acres entitled to be a native plant preserve, interested in passive recreational opportunities, education for kids, and the East/West connection of Balboa Park to establish perfect corridors that won't create impact to wilderness, interested in a 10 foot wide side walk with trees and street lights for the canyon, has 41 years in public planning
- Michael Ruiz (City Grounds Manager): has been following the work done in Switzer Canyon and work of SDCL, great opportunity for agency to collaborate w/ SDCL for trail and habitat restoration of Florida Canyon, there are challenges, lots of illegal encampments are time consuming but making progress, removed 7 tons of encampments from East and West mesas, Environmental Services Department will be working in the canyon through the end of year
- Ranger John Anderson: agrees with Michael Ruiz's comments
- Leslie Yu: with Friends of Balboa Park, nothing else to add
- John Bolthouse: Friends of Balboa Park stands as an advocate for all 12,000 acres of Balboa Park as a whole, and championing of the East Mesa Precise Plan
- Lizzie/Lucy Warren: horticulturist with Friends of Balboa Park, fully behind restoration of native plants within Florida Canyon, also neighbor of the park, hikes in canyon, Megan Shaw came up with idea of designated trails and signage which allow warrants to be issued to people off trails help prevent encampments, this could clean up debris and invasive plants in Florida Canyon,
- Eric Bowlby discussed an idea of partnership between SDCL and the Friends of Balboa Park
- Kate Callen: interested in preserving the green space in the canyons, concerns about the Pershing Drive lane reduction project, could lead to more traffic through Florida Canyon, She said SANDAG has indicated that the Pershing Drive plan is set
- Jackie Higgins: from the Balboa Park Conservancy, very supportive of this process, previous experience doing restoration work, has heard that the Pershing Dr. project will get permits in February
- Arya Ziyhamin: from House of Pacific Relations
- Michael Connolly: loves these kinds of projects in urban area, has been able to work a bit with Parks and NGO's like Groundwork, exciting that people starting to take an interest and glad that the canyons are no longer considered a fire hazard or wasted space, has a long association with the area and went to San Diego High School in Balboa Park, lots of work in restoration and conservation, the tribal community will have a lot of interest in the cultural resources in the canyon, Florida Canyon had one of last urban Kumeyaay villages before the people got expelled from the park in 1915 because they didn't look like the kind of Indians wanted for the World's Fair exposition, tribal members were brought in from New Mexico instead. There had been lots of urban Native American villages in San Diego in the early 20th century, believes that more

Kumeyaay members will want to be involved in Florida Canyon and there has been interest expressed in a hike through the canyon. The Kumeyaay relationship to land was such that they have no word for “nature” which was everything except people. Idea to integrate historical practices of Kumeyaay into this project such as implement traditional harvesting, currently in discussions with the Regional Water Quality Control Boards about how traditional harvesting is beneficial.

- Idea for an interpretive trail through the canyon with information about Kumeyaay traditions and history
- A field trip/hike through the canyon will be scheduled as part of this process
- Chelsi Sparti: will be reporting back to the North Park Planning Committee, she is also with Tree San Diego, North Park resident, biologist, canyons mean so much to region, canyons become anchor where people can learn, not everything that is not green is dead and should be protected, it is important to define what a trail is and why it is necessary to stay on trails
- Carrie Schneider: President of SDCL, excited to see enthusiasm about implementing the Florida Canyon plan from years ago, great to pull in neighbors of Florida Canyon and from the hospital, has approached the landfill about revegetation of the site and was told it can't be done because the landfill continues to slough
- David Zajac: there is currently a big push for evidence-based design in healthcare and understanding the connection between nature and health, nature is scientifically proven to enhance the healing process, the Naval Hospital is ultimately focused on healthcare and health outcomes
- Eric had the idea to connect the hospital to the canyon with a trail for the health benefits
- Carrie Schneider: interested in the use of the canyon as a nature classroom, how to use the canyon as a teaching tool for which native plants people can be used in their own landscaping, idea for the canyon to be used as an interpretive native plant garden
- René Smith: interested in the history of human habitation in the canyon, there are known locations of artifacts and has heard a study was done, interest lies in bringing back Arizona Canyon, idea to push boundaries of where canyon is on the map to Park Blvd. and to expand the scope to cover the East Mesa, idea to put the top soil from the Plaza de Panama on the mesa, gave kudos to Friends of Balboa Park for the designated trails map
- Friends of Balboa Park can share this trails map
- Sean Cahall: supports closing Florida Drive, he lives 2 blocks off the canyon on Florida Drive and the traffic and noise are bad
- Eric displayed the renderings of closing Florida Drive, with images of existing conditions and potential future conditions
- 6 stakeholders had heard that closing Florida Drive was in the Master Plan from the 1980s, this plan would close Florida Drive from Morley Field Drive to Zoo Place
- Stakeholders questioned how the plan to reduce the lanes on Pershing Drive could have been approved without taking the Florida Drive closing into consideration
- Eric Bowlby asked if any of the stakeholders present were opposed to closing Florida Drive between Zoo Place and Morley Field Drive, no one raised their hands
- Stakeholder noted that it will be important to see how traffic is affected if/when the Pershing Dr. project is complete

- One stakeholder had looked into SANDAG's report on the Pershing Dr. project and the traffic studies project moving a portion of the traffic onto the bike lanes and reducing driving, but made a note that modeling bike use is in its infancy and can't determine the impact on traffic
- Stakeholder noted that in Amsterdam 20% of commuters were using bikeways in 1979
- Stakeholder questioned why those supporting the closing of Florida Dr. need to oppose the reduced lanes at Pershing Dr., thinks more bike lanes would be good, is concerned about connecting the Florida Dr. project to the Pershing Dr. project, brought up the idea to temporarily close Florida Dr. to study it
- Another stakeholder thinks the Florida Dr. project and Pershing Dr. project are connected because when Pershing Dr. is closed, the traffic will be diverted to Florida Dr.
- Eric said that traffic studies would be about \$7-\$8,000 thousand dollars
- Mike Ruiz from City told group that there would need to be a concerted effort by a group like SDCL or a Balboa Park group to get Florida Dr. temporarily closed
- Stakeholder added that streets are regularly closed temporarily for Park Days or festivals
- One stakeholder thinks that the stakeholders present at the meeting may not be representative of the whole community, asked what City Councilmember Chris Ward's attitude was towards closing Florida Dr., believes Assemblymember Todd Gloria is in favor of the Pershing Dr. project
- Eric has talked to Councilmember Chris Ward about the Florida Dr. project, he seemed hesitant but neutral
- Stakeholder brought up that another alternative route to Pershing Dr. and Florida Dr. is Park Blvd.
- Stakeholder asked when the most recent traffic study has been done, thinks this would be a good place to start analyzing this question
- Goal of SDCL and Spurlock to find most recent traffic study
- Stakeholder asked if the Balboa Park Conservancy and/or Friends of Balboa Park have endorsed either project
- Jackie from the Conservancy said that they support the implementation of the Master Plan, and that closing Florida Dr. is in the Master Plan
- One stakeholder believes that the North Park Planning Committee endorsed the Pershing Dr. project and that they knew about the Florida Dr. project at the time, believes SANDAG had told the committee that they had decided on the Pershing Dr. project
- Stakeholder asked if bike groups have been invited to get involved in the stakeholder process, Eric said he will reach out to them

5. Introduce Spurlock Landscape Architects & Briefly Review Existing Conditions Maps

- a. Orientation to website and explanation of content of existing conditions mapping, www.sdcaanyonlands.org/cep (scroll down to Florida Canyon);
- b. Geo-topographical and Viewshed: Slope steepness, Views, Channel location, Drainage structures, Drain Conveyance, Erosion;
- c. Socio-infrastructure: Ownership, City/School/Right-of-way/Private Vacant, Trail Conditions, Sewer Access;
- d. Vegetation Communities
- e. Florida Canyon Trails Conditions Map

- Spurlock would like to show the canyon maps in a 3D format, examples were displayed, this would make it possible to visualize the topography of the canyon, there is a 100 ft. of grade change from top of slope to bottom of slope and from the North to the South end,
- The maps do not include the East mesa or Pershing Dr., just go to the top of the canyon slope, does go up to Upas St. and include Dog Park Canyon (finger canyon)
- Question if recommendations for Pershing Dr. and Florida Dr. should be included in any mapping/planning
- Spurlock displayed aerial images, these do not include the Rose Garden but do include the Cactus and Succulent Garden, do not include maintenance yard but do include slopes below the Naval Hospital
- Possible connection between Florida Canyon and other horticultural/biological resources in Balboa Park, Florida Canyon could be the native garden/preserve
- A potential pedestrian bridge over the canyon came up: to/from the East mesa, between Golden Hill and Inspiration Point (this is in the Master Plan), a bridge from the Prado is not in the Master Plan
- Stakeholder asked where the outlet of emissions coming off the landfill below the East mesa is, recommended we wouldn't want pedestrians walking near that
- One stakeholder believes that a pedestrian bridge would cost \$10-\$12 million and thinks that money could be invested in other canyon projects, making the pedestrian access safer that way
- Spurlock indicated that creating an accessible pathway was part of this project
- Eric asked if there are enough recognized trails in the canyon, asked what trails can be closed and given back to wildlife, added that the impact of all of the existing trails is debilitating and fragmenting the habitat
- Vicki Estrada added that the big issue is how we move forward with closing Florida Dr., also that if a bridge was added to the Master Plan it would need to be amended, the Master Plan calls for a World Garden on the East mesa
- The bridge can be an item on the agenda for the next meeting
- Vicki wrote an Op Ed for the Voice of San Diego a couple of years ago, recommended to close Florida Dr. but have barriers 50 ft. from the intersection to allow for parking, could set up traffic cameras on Park Blvd. and Pershing to do a traffic study
- Stakeholder proposed that 75% of the existing trails in Florida Canyon be closed
- Mike Ruiz from City said that canyon access needs to be assessed when evaluating trails to close, that social trails do need to be identified and then evaluated
- Eric asked which existing trails seem redundant and are fragmenting habitat, Spurlock recommended this be a question for the field visit and Mike agreed
- Ranger John Anderson added that he is currently working with the California Conservation Corps in Florida Canyon and trying to figure out which of the existing trails are official trails, working on enhancing the trail project in the canyon, added that the current situation with the unsheltered population is requiring a lot of resources and that much of the focus has been put on the enforcement side of this job rather than the resource management side, stressed the importance of groups like SDCL to help, mentioned that City got a SANDAG grant for a restoration project in the canyon

- Eric added that there are lot of grant opportunities for canyon projects including from SANDAG, the California Coastal Conservancy including Prop 1 and Prop 68 grants
- Stakeholder believes that Florida Canyon is an unexplored asset in the community and that increased outreach and support needs to be garnered, could promote the canyon as a biological, cultural and historical resource
- Kate asked if that's appropriate:
- Michael Connolly said that using the canyon as an educational tool would be appropriate but warned against calling out specific cultural resources found in the canyon because there have been instances of theft in the past, recommended participation from other groups, including: the Kumeyaay Diegueño Land Conservancy, Kumeyaay Heritage Preservation Committee, Kumeyaay Cultural Repatriation Committee, SDSU does not release the information
- Vicki added that the Kumeyaay village had stood near the B Street yard on the south side of the canyon and that resources are scattered throughout the canyon

6. Review of Socio-Infrastructure Conditions -Stakeholder Input

- All of the planning maps and workshop notes can be found on SDCL's website at www.sdcanonlands.org/cep, scroll down to the Florida Canyon section
- Recommendation to expand the boundaries of the planning area on the maps all the way to Park Blvd. to include the lawns, the runoff from these lawns can impact the native habitat in the canyon

Eric opened the workshop up to the stakeholders for additional comments

- Alan will send his list of plants growing in the canyon to Eric
- Stakeholder believes Florida Canyon is one of the best educational assets in San Diego, used by the Roosevelt Middle School one block away, City College, Francis Parker, San Diego High, volunteer groups
- Spurlock asked how developed the interpretive opportunities in the canyon should be
- Stakeholder recommended the maps be turned into an educational tool to engage people in the canyon, could show all the features and land in and surrounding the canyon, stressed that its incumbent on all of the stakeholders to make sure that the information is accessible, believes not enough people know about Florida Canyon
- Stakeholder stressed the importance to do outreach to all of the surrounding 5-6 planning groups, including Downtown, Uptown, Mission Hills, South Park and Golden Hill
- Eric recommended doing outreach to CPC but was told by stakeholders that only the chairs of planning groups attend that meeting
- Stakeholder spoke about the importance of mobilizing and engaging community members and highlighted the love they have for their neighborhood canyons
- Mike Ruiz from City spoke about the potential need for a Natural Resource Management Plan for the long-term preservation of Florida Canyon as a resource, that the Master Plan was written before the MHPA (City's Multiple Habitat Planning Area), and that other areas have this type of long-range document but Florida Canyon does not
- Eric added that SDCL is doing restoration planning as part of the CEP process. It can be restored but in an urban environment, it needs to have sustainable maintenance.

- Representative from the Naval Hospital added that there are 5,000 average visits per day to the hospital and that things have changed since the original Master Plan, interested to see what the traffic patterns are like currently, does not want to add stress to people trying to get to the hospital, there are staff who bike and use public transportation to get to the hospital, wants to ensure that a thoughtful decision is being made and the impacts are known
- One stakeholder thinks that it would be possible to determine the current traffic patterns based on the data from the 1989 study done as part of the Master Plan, along with comparison of more recent studies
- Vicki can share the data from the 1989 study

7. Next Meeting & Stakeholder Field Trips,

- ~~December 5th or 6th recommended by SDCL~~
- NOTE: Suggested dates for next meeting are revised to January 8, or 9, or 10; Please let Eric know your availability for those dates.
- A weekend field visit was supported by the stakeholders and will be planned after the second stakeholder meeting
- Items for next meeting agenda: East Mesa Plan, cultural resources, pedestrian bridge