

## **Florida Canyon Enhancement Planning**

**Draft Notes, Workshop 2, January 10, 2019, 6:00pm to 8:00pm**

**Golden Hill Recreation Center**

**2600 Golf Course Dr, San Diego, 92102**



### **Stakeholder Attendees**

#### **Facilitators**

- Eric Bowlby, San Diego Canyonlands Executive Director
- Vicki Estrada, Chair CEP Committee, landscape architect, created 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
- Miranda Hyldahl, San Diego Canyonlands Operations Supervisor
- Andrew Butterfield, San Diego Canyonlands GIS Specialist

#### **Florida Canyon Stakeholders**

- Alan Bennett, Florida Canyon volunteer for 10 years, California Native Plant Society
- Kate Callen, SoNo Neighborhood Alliance
- René Smith, interested party
- Arya Zeighamnia, Balboa Park international cottages
- David Zajac, Community Planning & Liaison Officer for Naval Base San Diego
- Matt Thompson, Florida Canyon neighbor
- Lisa Cumper, Jamul Indian Village
- Chris Justice, local resident
- Chelsi Sparti, North Park Planning Committee, Board Chair of Tree San Diego
- Roberto Bejar, City of San Diego Park Ranger

#### **1. Stakeholder Introductions -Summary of CEP Process to date:**

- Canyon Enhancement Planning (CEP) Intro/Brochure
- Meeting #1 – Brief highlights, November 15<sup>th</sup> Notes sent December 12<sup>th</sup>
  - Review Workshop 1 notes and attendees
- Notes, Maps and more information are posted on our website. Scroll down to Florida Canyon: [www.sdcanyonlands.org/cep](http://www.sdcanyonlands.org/cep)
- 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
- Planning public lands only, City's Environmentally Sensitive Lands Regulations apply

#### **2. Urban Planning Consultants Introductions & Presentations**

- **Vicki Estrada:** Chair CEP Committee, landscape architect, created 1980 Balboa Park Master Plan
  - **World Garden on East Mesa (Location of Arizona Canyon Landfill)**
  - **Cultural Resources**
  - **Pedestrian Bridge**
    - Reviewed the map of Balboa Park canyons
    - Reviewed the EIR for the naval hospital section that highlights the presence of Kumeyaay artifacts
    - City set aside 1400 acres for “City Park” (then to become Balboa Park) back when population of San Diego was only 20,000
    - Reviewed past and recent plans for Balboa Park and Florida Canyon
    - Reviewed the 1989 Estrada Land Planning Balboa Park Master Plan- this includes plans to underground the zoo parking, add zoo exhibits
    - Reviewed the East Mesa Precise Plan: golf course would stay, propose to close Florida Drive, remove fences, landfill top to be a meadow, nursery to extend to landfill as well, small parking lot of 20 spaces at each end of the canyon, largely turning canyon back to the way it used to be, landfill has never officially closed, a world garden proposed on landfill itself for different groups to plant gardens, perimeter trail around the garden based on existing trail, incorporate Florida canyon in this garden and it can be “native” portion of garden
    - Proposed bridge over canyon that lines up with rose garden and fountain to world garden
    - Reviewed proposed Pershing Drive improvements from SANDAG, roundabout at Redwood, addition of bike path and narrowing lanes
    - Idea to test out closing Florida Drive
    - Stakeholder noted the traffic impacts from higher density in North Park which are leading to higher speeds and traffic volume- stakeholder added that closing FLA Drive could add additional impacts
    - Stakeholder added that there are bikeway plans on both Pershing and Park Blvd, and that SANDAG has said they are not aware of the Balboa Park Master Plan
- **Andy Spurlock:** Landscape Architect, on the Canyon Enhancement Planning (CEP) committee, worked on the Florida Canyon Master Plan in 1975
  - There is erosion along the stream in Florida Canyon, the watershed that flows into the canyon is large and comes all the way from El Cajon Blvd., Florida Creek flows into Switzer Creek
  - Reviewed the flood plain map, City’s maintenance yard is a flood area, East Village is in the flood plain, which can become a motivator for revegetation in

Florida Canyon, a restored canyon would retain more runoff from causing flooding and erosion downstream

- Park Blvd. was realigned at one point and it was moved East
- Idea to transform lawns on East side of Park Blvd. that are adjacent to the canyon into a native plant garden or extend the canyon habitat to Park Blvd.
- Summary of Florida Canyon vegetation maps- the pink on the maps shows the disturbed areas, including area around Morley field, tennis courts, edges adjacent to nursery, strips of land in each finger canyon, area along Park Blvd, slope of Naval Hospital and landfill, edge of East Mesa, finger canyon is considered one of nicer areas with established chaparral habitat
- The proposed bridge was on plans in the 1970's
- Input wanted on if we should create new uses outside of the roadbed and disturbed landscape areas, there is a want to restore habitat in disturbed areas, question of how many trails we want
- The fact that there are too many trails in the canyon could be preventing people from using the canyon. They could get lost and they make the canyon more difficult to police
- Reviewed traffic count map, more traffic on the southern part of Florida Dr. until it connects to Zoo Place, accident figures are higher at intersections
- Reviewed SANDAG projections for 2050, stays the same without closing Florida drive
- Stakeholder noted that North Park is projected for 72% increase in population by 2030
- Ideas heard: circulation issues if Florida Dr. is closed, trail reduction on western slope of canyon, trailheads at north and south end of closed Florida Dr. with potential parking at each end, creating pedestrian access to the canyon from Balboa Park, the canyon is a gateway to the Naval Hospital and Balboa Park with residents and visitors coming off of the I-5 and roads providing access to Golden Hill and North Park;
- Haven't heard alternatives to keeping finger canyons on east as natural areas, reducing renegade trails
- The degraded slopes on the West side of the canyon are an opportunity for habitat restoration
- Question about how to create effective transitions from developed parks and fields adjacent to the canyon, to the native habitat in the canyon
- Question about how to handle the eucalyptus trees
- Florida Dr. is one of few streets that drains to the middle, with no storm drain, this causes it to need to be repaved very frequently

- Question about what could be done with slopes, including below the golf course, hospital, and zoo
- Opportunities to improve the landscape of the B Street maintenance yard
- There are drains that go underneath road in the floor of the canyon, the road dams the flood plain from one side of canyon to the other
- Stakeholder added that the canyon was given as wilderness and it is the last 150 acres of that native plant preserve from the original 1400 acres
- Question about how much grading should be proposed to mitigate stormwater issues
- Stakeholder noted that there are already 37 parking spots off Morley Field Dr, and suggested that an effort to fill and bring stream back up to where it is supposed to be, flood control structure suggested
- Eric spoke about a flood control project in Maple Canyon that could be scalable to other canyons, talked about runoff and why it is happening and a problem, one of SDCL's primary goals of restoration of the canyons is stabilization of streams, and this is an opportunity to increase riparian habitat by slowing runoff down
- Suggestion to have a multipurpose trail instead of multiple trails if Florida Dr. is closed, and that it would need to serve some emergency access

### **3. Conditions in Florida Canyon Today, Conversation with Rangers**

- **Illegal activities and dangerous refuse, 11 to 15 tons of refuse to remove**
  - Park Ranger Roberto Bejar spoke about the current state of Florida Canyon, it is at paradigm shift
  - There has not been a significant fire in 2.5 years, but there are fire scars that are decades old, this is why fire prevention efforts are heavier in Florida Canyon
  - Lots of refuse in the canyon, every time it rains it goes further into the canyon and becomes harder to remove
  - Uses some strategic vegetation thinning to improve line of sight, removing terracing, fortification fencing, and patrolling to prevent new and recurring homeless encampments and it has been successful
  - The leading cause of habitat loss from encroachment is fire
  - Ranger needs help with cleaning up the canyon, he can provide logistics but needs volunteers (no children due to safety)
  - Stakeholder recommended Tree San Diego

### **4. Summary of discussion and feedback**

- Question of what can be done if Florida Dr. isn't closed, ideas to narrow it

- Question of what the best “selling-points” are for closing Florida Dr. are;
- One suggestion is that solving the issues of flooding downstream from the canyon is very important
- Suggestion to give 5 different angles of closing Florida Dr. in an “elevator speech” including: the Balboa Park Master Plan was passed in 1989 and 40 years later it has still not been implemented and it is time to make government functional,
- Other benefits include community engagement, environmental education, recreational values, wildlife values, pollution filtration and watershed values
- When SONO launched, the topic of green space was the #2 priority in a survey
- Stakeholder added that we are all here as people not as cars, that these canyons do not exist for cars, instead of approaching the issue from a policy perspective, approach it from the people’s perspective, this could be presented to the public as an opportunity to come see what the canyon was like before there was a road through it, start the conversation there, put the focus on people and plants
- One stakeholder works at the international cottages on weekends, meets lots of people from LA who come to see a park, walk around, they could be users of the canyon as well
- There is huge historical value with the Kumeyaay village having been in Florida Canyon, there could be a Kumeyaay interpretive trail in the canyon, and it could be used as an exhibit for Balboa Park
- Idea that there could be a Kumeyaay garden in the adjacent World Garden as well
- Question of what opposition is there to closing Florida Dr. other than traffic issues, resistance to change could be a factor
- Stakeholder interested in the issue of undergrounding of the power lines in the canyon and the methane from the landfill
- Suggestion to talk to other places that have dealt with similar situations of closing roads in parks, Central Park in New York is closing a road, Vicki will do research on this
- Suggestion to hold a community event (plants and people day, bike day, canyon cleanup), close Florida Dr. for that and then do a traffic study during that time
- Stakeholder noted that Florida Dr. is a park street not a City street, and a different department might be in charge of it
- Stakeholder support for doing a traffic study, don’t want to negatively impact the community or the medical center, idea to do a pilot study that is beneficial to all
- Question if medical personnel from Naval Hospital are using the canyon for health benefits, Yes, there is a healing garden on the property with a view of the canyon
- Stakeholder noted that SANDAG paid for a traffic study along the Pershing corridor up to Utah St. about 4.5 months ago
- Eric added that if we couldn’t close Florida Dr., we could still give it a road diet
- Stakeholder thinks that some mountain bikes are causing problems with unofficial trails, and that there may need to be increased enforcement

- Idea to use cactus cuttings to close trails, stakeholders have seen this done in other places (CalTrans building in Old Town)
- Vicki may be able to help with measuring and explaining the benefit of restoring the canyon for preventing downstream flooding, suggestion to engage university students to help with this too
- Suggestion to brand the canyon as open space and make sure users see the value in this, It is not a traditional park
- Suggestion to engage the Canyoneers from the Natural History Museum

#### **5. Next Meeting will be a Saturday morning Stakeholder Field Trips, To Be Determined**

- Saturday mornings work for stakeholders in attendance

#### **Canyonlands Enhancement Plan Goals (Identical to East Mesa Precise Plan):**

- **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;**
- **Protect Historical Resources, Kumeyaay Village was located in/near Florida Canyon**
- **Incorporate recreation in ways that are compatible with natural resources.**