

River des Peres Watershed Coalition Planning Forum

March 25, 2008; 6:00-8:00 pm

University City Community Center at Heman Park

Meeting Summary:

Danelle Haake, interim chair of the River des Peres Watershed Coalition, welcomed the 30 or so attendees to the second in our series of planning forums. Ms. Haake introduced Susan Mintz, the Executive Director of The Green Center. The Coalition was developed as a special project of The Green Center (a non-profit organization) and still functions in this capacity. Ms. Haake also introduced the members of the Board who were in attendance at the meeting: Jim Bergmann, Jen Freund, Donald Jeffries, and Dan Sherburne. These are people to go to if you have questions about the Coalition or about the River des Peres.

Ms. Haake then reviewed the critical issues as discussed, categorized, and prioritized at the February meeting:

1. Education (26)
 - Includes public awareness, perception, and advocacy
2. Hydrology (26)
 - Includes flooding, lack of sustained flow, stormwater, and impervious surfaces (watershed and channel)
3. Water Quality (25)
 - Includes both point and nonpoint sources, odor, litter, and stream classification
4. Policy (19)
 - Includes regulations and accountability
5. Aesthetics (7)
 - Includes negative perception, lack of awareness, and lack of interest
6. Habitat Quality (7)
 - Includes bank erosion, impervious channel, and invasive species
7. Floodplain Development (1)

Ms Haake reviewed the ‘homework’ that had been assigned: How can the River des Peres Watershed Coalition can address each of these areas of concern? Several of the participants from the last forum who were unable to attend had forwarded their ideas. An example of one such e-mail was distributed.

Before tackling the meat of the evening’s discussion, Ms. Haake led the group on a ‘field trip’ to the River des Peres, which happens to flow immediately behind the Heman Park Community Center. Participants made note of the trash in the stream, the gabion basket retaining walls, the native gravel substrate, and the odor coming from the adjacent mulch area.

A question was posed regarding the condition of the stream in this location relative to other segments. Ms. Haake responded that there are segments that are much worse: fully lined by concrete, more littered, or with very bad bank erosion. There are also stretches that are much better with natural banks, less trash, and the original stream meanders.

Another question was posed as to the possibilities of having some sort of vegetation growing in the gabion baskets. Ms. Haake responded that it is probably possible for something to grow there, but if that is the desired effect, it is more effective to use some other technology that incorporates vegetation by design, although at this point it is unlikely that the baskets will be removed any time soon in order to use such a technology. It is cost prohibitive.

When the group re-convened in the Community Center, Ms. Haake turned the meeting over to our facilitator, Mark Van Patten. Mr. Van Patten asked those who had written down ideas to present them to the group. After those ideas were presented, he requested that the whole group discuss additional ideas. The list below represents a summary of the ideas presented and the categories in which they belong:

1. Education (includes public awareness, perception, and advocacy)
 - a. Website
 - Get a social networking/blog/forum on the website (allow users to put their information on-line immediately)
 - Provide information on BMPs (e.g., rain gardens) that are locally applicable
 - Add web content developed by Washington University students (including GIS data from stream teams and USGS; soil permeability)
 - Allow Stream Teams to upload data to our site
 - Information on local regulations and contacts
 - Success stories for porous pavement, rain barrels, rain gardens, LEED, etc.
 - Downloadable GoogleEarth tour of the River des Peres and tributaries
 - b. Media, Presentations, and Publications
 - Connect with everyone in all parts of the City and County via a wide variety of media outlets, large and small (e.g., county Journals, Times, *Localite*, *St. Louis Countian*, radio)
 - Re-develop 'Our Story' and tell it to whoever we can via documentaries, Living St. Louis TV show, YouTube, Current TV, etc. (Get in touch with Roger Taylor regarding his book/CD)
 - Have a documentary contest for schools.
 - Become '*the organization*' that people go to when they hear something about the River and want a comment from an expert
 - Have brochures at the sporting-type outlets (e.g., REI, Bass Pro, Dick's, Alpine Shop)
 - Make presentations in the community (e.g., churches, city councils, chambers of commerce)
 - Develop an exhibit to rotate around the community (display at MO Historical Society, Libraries, etc.)
 - c. Other
 - Have a River des Peres festival or a River des Peres Week where we have events throughout the watershed to get the public involved (clean-up and/or party)
 - Get people in the river
 - Get signs installed where roads cross the River des Peres and its tributaries
 - Do something so that people know where the river flows underground (paint the road blue)
2. Hydrology (includes flooding, lack of sustained flow, stormwater, and impervious surfaces)

- Start a watershed initiative to get rain gardens (like Kansas City) or rain barrels (like Springfield) throughout the watershed
- Stream bank restoration
- 3. Water Quality (includes point and nonpoint sources, odor, litter, and stream classification)
 - Become a Stream Team Association
 - Map the watershed – where are Stream Teams? where are critical areas? where should there be more teams?
 - Hold litter pick-up events
- 4. Policy (includes regulations and accountability)
 - Develop an on-line ‘library’ of the regulations and policies that apply to the River des Peres. Include information from MSD, Corps of Engineers, municipalities, etc.
 - Be advocates for the river when groups are doing things that are against the policies and regulations and the government is not doing their part to stop it or for things that are not in the best interests of the river, but are not specifically in violation of policy (e.g., bulldozing trees along the river to build a driving range, removing wetlands to build a retirement community, sending parking lot drainage into a gully causing erosion, etc.)
- 5. Aesthetics (includes negative perception, lack of awareness, and lack of interest)
 - Note that several of the items under Education also address Aesthetics
- 6. Habitat Quality (includes bank erosion, impervious channel, and invasive species)
 - Remove invasive species and plant native species in their place
- 7. Floodplain Development
 - Communicate with developers

Mr. Van Patten suggested that at this point we need to take a look at our list and consider what we are missing. He requested that we all take the ideas above and expand upon them before we meet again in April.

We need to keep in mind that we need to have specific ideas that address critical issues and are things that we can actually ‘do.’

The following events were announced:

- Our next meeting will be held on **Tuesday, April 29, 2008** at 6:30 pm at the Heman Park Community Center.
- We are in the process of applying for a grant. Funding from this grant would allow us to hire a part-time staff member. The grant deadline is April 15. Anyone who is interested in helping us in the grant-writing process should contact Danelle (riverdesperes@gmail.com).
- We will have a River des Peres Clean-Up event on **Saturday, March 29, 2008** from 9am to 1pm at Mona Terrace in University City. We need your assistance to remove the litter and honeysuckle that has accumulated at this site!