

Groundwork Watershed Coordination Meeting

Meeting Notes

10/18/2011

Intro

- Welcome: Michael Brunker
- Introductions: Vicki
- Stakeholders Web Page: Keryna
 - Groundwork has created a web page for the watershed stakeholder meeting series.
 - Contains overview of goals
 - Contains minutes from stakeholder meetings
 - Contains matrix of studies done within the watershed: people are invited to submit pdf's of their studies to add to the list.

County Supervisor Greg Cox: Introducing Robert Garcia

- Trails are an important priority for Supervisor Cox. Over 40% of County's budget goes to health and human services. Trails and outdoor activity facilities directly counter that problem.
- Recently rolled out Live Well San Diego
- Recently received recognition from national Rails to Trails program for his work in San Diego. He was one of 25 people nationally to receive the Rail-Trail Champions Award from the National Rail-Trail Conservancy.
- The focus of the meeting today is to hear about the work of Robert Garcia, attorney and founder of City Project in Los Angeles. He has received numerous honors for his work in studying and advocating for outdoor activity opportunities in underserved communities, which he has found are disproportionately communities with high Hispanic and black populations. Among his honors are being the recipient of the Presidents Award from American Public Health Program in 2010.

ROBERT GARCIA and SETH STRONGIN

- Overview: The City Project uses 5 strategies to accomplish their mission.

- **Community organizing and coalition building:** These are inherently community led processes. City Project simply helps people be successful.
- **Translate social science research into policy, law, and systemic social change**
- **Strategic media campaigns**
- **Policy and legal advocacy outside the courts:** For example, they found that the LA School District was not meeting their mandated school PE requirements. The City Project was able to facilitate resolution of that issue outside the courts.
- **Litigation:** Not the preferred tool, but sometimes needed.
- Over half of the schools in CA do not enforce the physical education requirements. City Project works to get those rules enforced.
- The City Project's work starts with a focus on people, children, and a view of how to improve their lives.
- The City Project recently completed an analysis for the San Diego area: *Parks for Everyone*, funded by the SD Foundation.

QUESTIONS

- What will it take to get some action behind the restoration of Chollas Creek at YMCA?
 - Community leaders are the drivers of change. Any successful effort has to have community based champions who will drive the process.
 - Build coalitions. Bring in non-traditional allies, common vision, and diverse values.
- Is there one particular forum of government that is more effective at forming policy change than others?
 - City Project works with all levels and has had success with them. Local governments are functionally the better place because they are closer to the issues.
 - Theoretically, the Federal government is the best place, but the sensibilities of some administrations are friendly to the issues and others are not.
 - The same strategies are applicable and the same science applies regardless of level/forum.
 - It's interesting to note that the US Military is starting to support youth activity programs because they are concerned they won't have physically capable people entering the military.

- What matters more than the level of the government partner is finding the person in the agency who is the champion for the issue.
- Is there any metric that can be used to prioritize projects?
 - No. Those tools need to be created by the groups
 - Visual tools are important for making progress on any project... illustrated master plans, etc.
 - For City Project, people are the number 1 value. They are not a strictly environmental organization.
- SEDC has committed funding for a park improvement along Chollas. Southcrest Trails Park. The project is hitting a variety of roadblocks. Anything people can do to help is appreciated.
- We all share the vision for what our watershed needs. How do we go about building the right coalition?
 - Need a leadership committee: designers, attorneys, community champions. It all starts from there.
- State regulators would like trails and people to be at least 100' away from the creek. Funding is available to get people close to the creek. In urban areas, how do we convince regulators to allow less than 100'.
 - We need bold public leaders that will find the funding necessary to solve problems.
- Environmental regulations are there for a reason. The Chollas creek plan provided the vision but it didn't provide the high level environmental permits necessary to get work done. Would it help to get the programmatic level permits in place allow this all to move faster?
 - Master agreements are very challenging. City Project has been engaged more on the big picture vision and has been helping put in place programs that prioritize certain communities for funding.
- San Diego River Coalition has RGP51 for removing invasive species in the SD River Watershed. We could do the same here and Canyonlands is willing to be part of helping to make that happen.

CLOSING REMARKS

- Bayshore Bikeway is progressing and is relevant to Chollas Creek. One main section left is the 32nd street to Seaport Village section, which dovetails with Chollas Creek nicely.

- SANDAG RTP is contemplating going out to the bond market to ask for money that would accelerate bikeway projects. Money could end up in Transnet funding.
- We have to be careful not to get stuck in an endless planning mode, but sometimes it helps to get a master plan done to facilitate the long term comprehensive vision.