

CLAREMONT HILLS WILDERNESS MASTER PLAN

Technical Advisory Committee

Meeting Summary Report March 7, 2014

Introduction

On March 7, 2014, members of the Technical Advisory Committee of the Claremont Hills Wilderness Master Plan met for the first time. The purpose of the session was to 1) introduce committee members to the TAC purpose and charge, 2) provide an overview of the Master Plan Project, 3) discuss outcomes and expectations for the TAC, 3) collect public comments and, 4) discuss potential visitor intercept survey questions for the Master Plan process.

Overview of the TAC: Purpose and Process

The primary purpose of the TAC is to provide feedback into the public engagement process and input on specific issue areas that will inform the Claremont Hills Wilderness Park Master Plan. The TAC is charged with reviewing and commenting on technical data presented by the project team. Over four meetings, the project team will present information on topic areas related to the Master Plan such as parking, resource protection, signage, safety, etc. The TAC will also review the approach to the proposed outreach activities and provide feedback on methods and activities that the TAC can volunteer time to ensure maximum participation by the community. The TAC will strive to reach consensus on elements of a preferred conceptual site plan and make its recommendation to the City Council.

Meeting Agenda and Format

The meeting took place on March 7, 2014 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. at the Alexander Hughes Community Center in Claremont, California.

Master Plan Project Overview

John Baas gave a presentation about the Master Plan project (note the Powerpoint presentation is also available on the City's website).

The goals of the Master Plan are to:

- Preserve sensitive environmental resources;
- Manage for passive use;
- Minimize impacts to the surrounding neighborhoods,; and
- Fully engage interested parties, users and the community at large in the planning process.

The scope of work for the Master Plan includes the following tasks:

- Review of existing documentation
- Public engagement plan
- Inventory of existing conditions
- Carrying capacity
- Environmental baseline
- Resource Management Plan
- Usage, amenities, and operations
- Parking evaluation and options
- Site maps
- Final Master Plan

The schedule was also presented, with the following major dates:

Project launch, January, 2014

Master Plan tasks to be completed by the end of November, 2014

Review of the draft Master Plan by the Community and Human Services Commission, Planning Commission, and City Council in December, 2014

Master Plan Adoption in January, 2015

Facilitated Discussion –Desired Outcomes and Expectations

Several themes surfaced from the committee discussion on desired outcomes and expectations. These themes emphasized the following six ideals:

Sanitation • Safety • Stewardship • Balance • Equity • Education

Specific outcomes and expectations for the Master Plan and planning process expressed by the committee which fall under the aforementioned principles are as follows:

Sanitation

Community members expressed concerns related to sanitation issues.

- Sanitation issues affecting neighboring residential property owners
- Consider sanitation issues that could result in visitors being displaced to other areas

Safety and Enforcement

The safety of both the community and wildlife stood out as a top priority among TAC participants.

- Neighborhood
 - Contemplate park hours as they relate to neighborhood and user safety
 - Consider residential impacts of off-trail usage
 - Address parking concerns that affect residents of the surrounding neighborhoods
 - Examine impacts of evening use of the wilderness area
 - Assess the risk of off-leash dogs
- Wilderness
 - Prevent over usage of the wilderness area

- Study the impacts of wilderness area usage on wildlife
- Consider fire risks

Stewardship

The group emphasized the importance of this ethic, which embodies the responsible planning and management of resources, throughout the process and in the final product.

- Think about the Master Plan from a watershed management perspective
- Maintain or enhance opportunities for groundwater re-charge
- Prioritize the preservation of nature in the Master Plan
- Preserve the sense of solitude the wilderness area can provide visitors
- Aim to minimize displacement of residents and wildlife
- Strive to maintain maximum quality of life for residents, visitors and community members
- Encourage volunteerism and a “friendly” environment
- Embrace different areas of the planning area
 - Natural area
 - “The Loop”

Balance

With many variables to consider in the planning process, the group expressed that particular importance should be placed on achieving balance in the final product.

- Maintain a balance between preservation, recreation, and residents
- Consider city maintenance costs and neighborhood impacts

Equity

Committee members discussed the importance of equity in both the Master Plan, and the planning process itself.

- Aim for a plan that allows for maximum use for all user types
- Strive for equity between local residents, surrounding community, and visitors/users
- Ensure all voices are heard
 - Creates support for the plan

Education

Participants expressed a desire for educational opportunities during and after the planning process.

- Inform community members and wilderness area users of the affects various activities have on residents of the area (both human and wildlife)
- Educate TAC participants about the historical evolution of the Claremont Hills area
- Engage community in learning about the planning process by reaching out to community members and neighbors
 - Direct mail to neighbors
 - TAC members promoting community meeting

Other Comments

- Consider the wilderness plan's contribution to the corridor plan
- Examine deed restrictions and requirements
- Contemplate non-scenic classification
- There was one comment pertaining to local control of the wilderness area- Maintain local control of The Claremont Hills wilderness and any surrounding locally owned lands

Visitor Intercept Survey Questions

Next, participants provided input on elements for a visitor intercept survey and brainstormed possible survey question. The group compiled a list of considerations for the survey design. These included:

- Making the survey available in multiple languages
- Identifying and reaching the different Claremont Wilderness Area user types
- Collecting/ utilizing parking data
- Determining actual use data
- Recognizing completion of the survey will be voluntary

Keeping the aforementioned ideas in mind, participants developed a list of possible questions for a survey. The following is a list of those questions:

- With what frequency is the area used?
 - At what times of day?
- Were users hiking in other areas prior to the expansion of this wilderness area?
- Do hikers visit the city of Claremont?
 - Will wilderness area users shop in Claremont?
- Where do users park? Why do they choose to park there in particular?
 - What is the pricing?
- What are users' thoughts on sustainable practices?
- Are users using social media to learn about wilderness?
 - If so, what user types?
- What are the opportunities for using other trails/ parks?
- How can the Claremont Wilderness Area mission be affirmed?
- To what extent, if any, will local resident displacement occur?

Public Comment

During the public comment period, participants expressed expectations they hoped would be addressed in the Master Plan by the technical team, and discussed with the committee and community throughout the planning process. The comments are grouped by theme below:

Process

Some comments spoke specifically to the planning process itself; communication logistics, meeting format, the role the community will play in it

- Add other city representatives to TAC
- Maintain a wide scope of ideas when revising the Claremont Hills wilderness area plan
- Utilize existing guiding documents for the City of Claremont

- Involve community in data-gathering processes

Research

Additional comments expressed ideas related to the type of data and solutions to be considered in the plan

- Consider [financial] user contributions for preservation activities
- Consider including “break” periods of non-use for the benefit of wildlife and residents
- Consider flood control
- Consider methods to promote/ change behavior
- Investigate if wildlife is being driven to other areas due to growing use in the wilderness area

Community

Several comments were related to community needs, and expectations of community members

- Educate Claremont staff and community members about sustainable practices
- Maintain access of wilderness area for the entire community
- Provide public education and encourage learning about the wilderness area
- Address bicyclists’ concerns
- Recall the area provides community health benefits beyond recreation
- Balance the needs of wilderness area users and those of residents
- Share the “community”

Next Steps and Close

The next steps are to prepare for and host the community wide meeting on March 24. The City will notice this meeting the week of March 9, 2014.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45p.m.