Alameda Creek Watershed Center Planning
SFPUC Meeting at with Sunol Residents at Sunol Yard Conference Room
May 11, 2012

Welcome

Irv Tiessen, the new chair of the Sunol Water Temple Preservation Association, welcomed everyone to the meeting. SFPUC staff provided a summary of all the meeting dates when feedback was received on the Watershed Center to date (Please see May 11, 2012 Working Outline of the Site Plan and Visitor Experience on sfwater.org/sunolvalley).

Overview of Preliminary Concepts for Facilities and Grounds

- Paul Okamoto, a design consultant for the SFPUC with Okamoto Saijo Architecture, described some design concepts for the Watershed Center and showed the preliminary site layouts that included the following:
    - Relocating the Center to the eastside of the Temple will provide for better solar orientation, space for the Watershed Discovery Trail and better access to the picnic area
    - Visual access down the road with no detraction from Temple
    - Passive solar design with the building orientation to best maximize solar opportunities
    - More of a campus approach with three smaller buildings to maximize outdoor gathering spaces as well as passive solar design

- Jennifer Rigby, an interpretive consultant for the SFPUC with the Acorn Group, provided an overview of the interpretive elements being considered for the Watershed Center that included the following:
    - This Center has a unique story to capture and show to visitors centering around the Sunol Water Temple, Alameda Creek Watershed and the water system
    - Interpretive planning is centered around planning thoughtfully with creativity and guidance to create a journey for the visitors
    - She explained the goal is to achieve a balance between low tech and high tech elements for the interpretive elements of the Watershed Center
    - She described the two-acre Discovery Trail around the temple and Watershed Center for visitors to meander through
    - The Trail will recreate five plant communities representing various areas of the watershed, and it will have some interpretive signage and benches to encourage understanding of the watershed

Feedback on Site Layout and Grounds Concepts

- Several community members felt that it is important to provide access to the confluence of Alameda Creek and the Arroyo de la Laguna for visitors to make the visceral connection to the confluence. The confluence should be celebrated. The City team responded that the confluence area was not included in the proposed construction. The proposed Watershed Center, grounds around the Temple, the picnic area, the entry road, and the entry grate ARE included.
- If this project is considered “Phase 1”, community members would like to see a description and time line for implementation of other phases of the project.

- If there is a pond at the Watershed Center, it needs to serve a biological purpose and be designed in a sustainable way.
- For the Watershed Center's parking lot and roof, the SFPUC should consider storm water retention and perennial ponds.
- The Discovery Trail should be a hub for other trails that could provide a connection to the East Bay Regional Park District trails.
- There was a request for an elevated platform with pointers showing the location of various landmarks in the area including the Ohlone Wilderness Park and others.
- Several community members mentioned that all the green elements should be showcased at the Center. Chris Gray mentioned that bio swales need to be designed correctly to function properly.
- The SFPUC should move the entrance feature back way from the Four Corners about 75-100 feet to create a safer entrance to the site. It was also suggested that the entrance needs to be restored.
- It would be nice to have a farmer's food stand near the Watershed Center.
- The SFPUC should contact Ron Torres with the Alameda County Environmental Health Department about a possible on-site wastewater treatment plant that is efficient and has been done at other locations.
- There was a request for an elevated platform at the Watershed Center for viewing ongoing mining operations and locating other vistas and points of interest in the area.

Feedback on Current Sunol Yard Buildings

- A green wall is needed at the Sunol Yard to screen the industrial buildings that have been constructed there. Dan Reasor added that he would like to see this green wall be an interpretive wall with edible features.
- The plans for the new shop buildings at the Sunol Yard were developed without any sensitivity to the surrounding area.
- A few people requested to see the drawings for the Sunol Yard. In response staff mentioned that the yard buildings will be carefully designed, and be sensitive to the Watershed Center complex. However, their primary purpose is functional, and therefore the design cannot undergo the same level of public input as the Center.

Closing Comments

- The Chair requested that the community members present raise their hand if they support the design efforts for the Watershed Center to date, and if they felt this project and the SFPUC is moving in the right direction. All 15 community members present raised their hands.
- The SFPUC will move forward with design using this preliminary layout.
- The group requested a more detailed plan of the various phases of the Watershed Center project.

Watershed Center website:

- Visit **www.sfwater.org/sunolvalley** for updates on the project