

## NNOD COMMENTS

### VOELCKER Phase 1B

February 2, 2009

#### 1. Balance of Recreation, Education and Sustainability Objectives in Phase 1B

**General:** NNOD recognizes and supports the education and sustainability goals of the master plan. We also believe the primary reason people will come to the park is because of the recreational opportunities and the unique opportunity to enjoy a slice of the Hill Country inside the city.

#### CONCERN:

- The scope of the initial phase in the development of the park provides limited recreational opportunities for adults, but does not adequately address the physical needs of children who will visit the park.

**Treatment of Waste Water from the Pavilion:** The proposed composting toilets, gray water disposal system, and rain water harvesting tanks are to address the Sustainability objective of the master plan for Voelcker Park and provide a vehicle for educating the public on methods that can be used to conserve our most critical natural resource.

#### CONCERN:

- According to Ms. Karen Guz of the SAWS Conservation Department, the design approach laid out for the Pavilion does not support the Water Conservation Program that has gained SAWS national recognition, or the next generation program that SAWS and the Mayor's Sustainability Task Force are in the process of developing.
- Implementing a water conservation system in Voelcker that uses technologies and approaches that differ from the ones SAWS has successfully implemented or plans to implement, will send a conflicted message to the public.
- There has been no cost benefit analysis conducted for the proposed design approach verses tapping into the local sewer lines and implementing the SAWS supported water conservation standards.

#### NNOD POSITION:

- NNOD recommends that the design approach for Voelcker Park, support the holistic sustainable approach SAWS takes toward water conservation and the recycling of sewage. Educational areas in Voelcker Park support SAWS efforts to inform the public of the advantages of its nationally recognized Water Conservation Program.

**PV (Solar) Panels.** The panels are being proposed in support of the Sustainability objective of the master plan.

#### CONCERN:

- There has not been a cost benefit analysis conducted for this design element, so the citizens have no knowledge if this is a worthwhile expenditure of our tax dollars.
- The cost of solar cell materials is at an all time high. Increased production is projected to reduce the price significantly in the next 2 to 3 years.
- Advances in Solar cells will make those purchased today obsolete in a few years.
- Based on a literature search there are at least two programs in the United States as well as multiple overseas programs investing large sums to increase the rate at which solar cells convert sun light to electricity from the 10% figure for current technology to 50%.
- At least two programs have demonstrated a 40% conversion rate.

#### NNOD POSITION:

- NNOD supports solar technology.
- CPS Energy should be consulted and participate in this project.
- Purchase and installation should be accomplished to maximize the return on investment.
- Since metal roofing is being used we recommend that this project be completed in conjunction with installation on the Ecology Center to take advantage of economies of scale.
- The pavilion must be designed to accept solar panels and capable to distribute power to the CPS grid.

## 2. OPEN AIR PAVILION

**Creek way trail passing through the pavilion:** This is a design feature to give the visitor the sense of passing through a “Gate House” as he starts or finishes his visit to the park.

#### CONCERN:

Bicycle traffic passing through the pavilion mixing with pedestrians who feel they are walking in a building and are not watching for through traffic as well as children running to and from a classroom to the bathrooms and activities.

#### DESIGNERS SOLUTION:

- A bypass trail for cyclists that takes through traffic around the pavilion via a portion of the Water Loop trail.
- Provide signs/obstacles to require cyclists to dismount before entering pavilion area.

#### NNOD POSITION:

NNOD is concerned that the solution proposed is not going to solve the problem and is going to create a safety and enforcement problem for the park staff/police.

### **Open Design of Pavilion.**

#### CONCERN:

- The design provides little to no protection from cold winds and rain, which limits the days it, can effectively be used.

- The Park Board presentation also raised this issue, and the design team proposed some sort of mechanically operated closure that could provide greater protection to the class room spaces against the elements.

#### NNOD POSITION:

- It is NNODs understanding that this pavilion was intentionally designed to be open and that the Ecology Center will have enclosed facilities for educational and civic uses.
- The use of a mechanically operated screen to protect the class room against the weather is not supported. This feature will add to the initial cost of the project and increases the maintenance costs of the park.
- It is recommended that the Park Department document the needs of the local school districts for class room space to support field trips.

### 3. SALADO CREEK OVERLOOK

**Salado Creek Overlook.** The overlook is designed to provide the visitor the opportunity to admire the beauty of the creek valley and the limestone cliffs that form one side of the valley. Several concepts for the design of the overlook were presented that ranged from a platform with unrestricted visibility in all directions to ones that included a wall or a wall with overhead cover.

#### CONCERN:

- That the privacy of the neighbors to the overlook will be compromised.
- The addition of a wall or overhead cover to the overlook is counterproductive to enabling the visitor to enjoy a view of the park, valley and the cliffs. Even if interesting openings are cut into the wall to focus the visitors view, it is still going to obstruct the visitors over all view, and lead to a claustrophobic feeling.

#### NNOD POSITION:

- The overlook platform should be developed as an open platform with railing.
- That the city continue to work with the neighbors impacted by the overlook to seek a win-win solution i.e. closing of the overlook while the leaves are off the trees and planting of an evergreen buffer to obstruct the view from the overlook to the impacted homes.

**Salado Creek Overlook - Path and Waterfall.** A proposal was made to collect the storm water runoff that the path to the overlook intercepts, then channel the runoff down the path and over the end of the overlook to create a water fall.

#### CONCERN:

- Not considered cost effective or functional based upon area and drainage.
- The area under the grill will be difficult to clean, which will result in the oak leaves collecting in the ditch and at best looking unsightly and at worst clogging the ditch.
- There is no indication the design for the overlook has any provision for explaining the significance of the creek valley and the story told by the limestone cliffs.

#### NNOD POSITION:

- That the trail to the overlook be designed to allow the water to flow over the trail and on down the hill. That any funding programmed for the “water fall” be redirected to an educational exhibit on the bluff that tells the story of the valley and the cliffs.

#### 4. SOUTH PLAY AREA

**Distance from the Apartments and Condominiums.** According to the Voelcker Master Plan on page 73, the Grass Loop trail, to the south of the South Play Area, is to be a minimum of 100 feet from the Devonshire Condominiums and the play area at an even greater distance.

#### CONCERN:

- The drawings available at the public meeting did not provide sufficient detail to allow individuals to determine if the play field is placed according to the master plan.
- The requirement for a larger maintenance facility and the new requirement for industrial type operations (recycling and composting) so close to the neighbors is troubling.

#### NNOD POSITION:

- Master Plan size and boundaries must be maintained.
- Consider locating the south sports field further from the apartments - dependent upon the tree survey.
- The Maintenance Facility should, in a future phase, be located and sized to be compatible with surroundings.

**Layout of the South Play Area.** Off NW Military there is in order a buffer zone, parking, picnic, play area, road, sports/play fields, and treed land.

#### CONCERN:

- The traffic noise from Military is quite high, and the picnic area, where people want to sit and talk away from the stress of city life, is closer to the noise source than the play fields where ambient noise is not as much of a problem.
- The road is along side of the play area for children and between the play area and sports/play field.

#### NNOD POSITION:

- Request further study of this area with community input. The feasibility of placing the sports/play fields closest to NW Military with the play area, picnic grove and parking furthest from the road should be explored.