

MEETING MINUTES / 6 PAGES

Project: City Arch River 2015, MVVA #10001
Meeting Date: 2011-March-24
Meeting Purpose: **National Park Service (NPS) Meeting – Design Discussion #3**
Distribution Date: 2011-April-7
Prepared by: James Smith, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc. (MVVA)

Participants:	Title:	Affiliation:
Ann Honious	Chief of Museum Services and Interpretation	JNEM, NPS
Ed Dodds	Chief of Facility Maintenance	JNEM, NPS
Jim Jackson	Law Enforcement Specialist	JNEM, NPS
Frank Mares	Deputy Superintendent	JNEM, NPS
Bob Moore	Historian	JNEM, NPS
Kathryn Thomas	Cultural Resources Curator	JNEM, NPS
Jim Jacobs	Gardener Supervisor	JNEM, NPS
Randy Biallas	Assistant Director, Park Cultural Resources Program	NPS
Kathy Schneider	Midwest Regional Office	NPS
Marla McEnaney	Landscape Architect	NPS
Don Stevens	Senior Historian	NPS
Judith Deel	Archeologist	MO SHPO
Mark Miles	Director	MO SHPO
Kris Zapalac	Historic Preservation Specialist	MO SHPO
Jenny Nixon	Senior Vice President	Bi-State/Metro
Justin Struttman	Director of Operations, Gateway Arch Riverfront	Bi-State/Metro
Chris Rimsky	Director of Capital Projects	Bi-State/Metro
David Grove	Executive Director / CEO	JNPA
Jennifer Sandy	Program Officer, Midwest Office	NTHP
Ann Chance	Director of Special Events	St. Louis City
David Newburger	Commissioner on the Disabled	St. Louis City
Todd Waeltermann	Director of Streets	St. Louis City
Todd Antoine	Deputy Director of Planning	Great Rivers Greenway
John Clark	President	Laclede's Landing Redevelopment
Gullivar Shepard	Senior Associate	MVVA
Nate Trevethan	Senior Associate	MVVA
James Smith	Associate	MVVA
Chris Donohue	Senior Project Manager	MVVA
Gina Hillberry	Partner	CHA (w/ MVVA)
Tom Bradley (not present)	Superintendent	JNEM, NPS
Guy Nordensen (not present)	Principal	Guy Nordenson and Associates
Jacqui Hawkins (not present)	Associate	Guy Nordenson and Associates

Distribution: All Participants

Meeting Location: JNEM Maintenance Facility – Training Room
 201 Poplar Street
 St. Louis, MO 63102

Meeting Time: 9:30am-1:30pm

GENERAL

The purpose of the meeting was to conduct Design Discussion #3 with the focus being on the design of the Central Riverfront and the South Gateway.

DISCUSSION

A. Review Procedure

1. MVVA will provide PDFs & printouts of presented material as the basis for formal comments to the design team.
2. MVVA will take & circulate meeting minutes for review and comment.
3. Each reviewing agency will be responsible for submitting comments within two weeks of each review.
4. It is anticipated that new issues may arise regarding topics reviewed previously. MVVA encourages reviewers to draw in relevant considerations from prior Design Discussions.

B. Riverfront

1. MVVA identified the existing programmatic conditions of the historic levee, highlighting its function as a venue for public events, but also as an edge to the unpredictable and powerful Mississippi River.
2. MVVA presented the riverfront concept with a series of slides and images showing the intended form and materiality of an improved riverfront.
3. Conceptually the new riverfront proposal is based on finding a better balance between vehicular and pedestrian, bike, and other programming, such as a new stage and public space amenities at the base of the central stairs.
4. This proposed transformation of Leonor K. Sullivan Boulevard highlights the presence and experience of the Arch, the cobble levee, and the river, while also acting as a traffic calming device by breaking down the straight-away it is currently. Reviewers asked if a greater meander in the roadway might additionally quiet vehicle traffic and noted a need for benches, given the length of the pathways. MVVA suggested that the combination of the road narrowing, the central bend in the road, the paving differentiations and “rumble strips” are strategic devices that will slow vehicular traffic as desired.
5. Reviewers noted that there are high volumes of bus traffic during peak visiting times, which park at the curb in the area of the central stairs. MVVA indicated that the new design includes a lane for buses to pull over and load/unload on both sides of the travel way. MVVA suggested that designating these spots is important to control where buses stop and improves the quality of the space at the base of stairs. MVVA requests some definition from the group as to the number of buses in order to further evaluate the location and amount of bus pull-over areas. This study should also include horse-drawn carriages, taxis, and servicing vehicles.
6. MVVA presented the cobble embankment as a spatial divide between upper and lower pedestrian promenade at the river’s edge. This transition also helps to further develop the concept of engaging the riverfront as a visitor experience that builds a relationship between the Arch and the River.
7. Reviewers commented on the concern that people stepping between parked cars into traffic is a hazard. MVVA suggested that the design intends to improve safety by providing designated pedestrian crossing areas that are more clearly defined in the proposed design, are more generous in size, and include rumble strips to slow and alert traffic to pedestrians.

8. Reviewers commented on the chosen Paver material and whether there would be special maintenance/cleaning issues. MVVA responded that the chosen materials are heavy duty interlocking pavers that when tightly fit and on a good base should prove to be durable and smooth surface. MVVA has contacted a local vendor of the pavers and is arranging for samples, data, and a potential demonstration on site installations to assist in confirming that the chosen paver is suitable.
9. Reviewers commented that a central concern with the historical levee is the need for smooth, safe, and accessible walks to businesses on the riverfront. The hope is to facilitate new businesses and provide the needed amenities. MVVA is not intending to change the slope of the entire cobble levee. The new embankment slope is not intended as a walking surface; seawalls and strategic stairs will direct people's passage from Leonor K Sullivan down on to the cobble levee in a compliant and safe manner. MVVA presented a proposal that created a permanent circulation spine that was accessible, but the semi-permanent paths would have to connect riverfront businesses to this spine—similar to how these businesses currently provide for safe access through the cobble.
10. Reviewers asked about other agencies review and acceptance of the proposed riverfront design. MVVA indicated that USACE and Port Authority (including Nick Nichols) have been shown the proposal and are thus far accepting of the proposal and that HEC RAS modeling is being done to test the design as part of an ongoing engagement with the USACE. Reviewers requested data on the river model and survey for review. MVVA also indicated that URS (MVVA team) is starting a review of the riverfront design to evaluate marine engineering needs.
11. Reviewers expressed concern about the location and type of stage setup implied in the design. The logistics of staging at the existing area include easy access to power and a defined “architectural” stage upon which to set up. Also a front of stage area should be included for preferred viewing and allowance for back of stage support vehicles and performers vehicles needs to be accommodated (on cobble levee).
12. It is recommended that MVVA should meet with the local staging companies to understand typical needs for staging and operational conflicts.
13. Reviewers commented on the need for strategic methods of egress north and south and around the staging area for emergency and other support during events. It is recommended that MVVA review the design with the police and fire departments.
14. Reviewers asked what the maintenance plan is. Currently the area falls under City maintenance. This issue is one of particular concern when developing plans for utilities, etc. MVVA discussed the idea of embedding utilities supporting the riverfront landscape directly into the proposed crash walls at the toe of slope on the JNEM Eastern slopes. MVVA offered that this may be a practical solution, but will need further review to determine future operations agreements between the City and the NPS.
15. Reviewers asked if there is a possibility of raising grade at Poplar Street and Washington Avenue in order to reduce the use of floodgates and raise the potential bikeway connections out of the 1 year flood event. MVVA responded that it is not currently the plan to raise grade in these areas as that would have an impact on the Overlook walls and sites outside of the project limit of work.
16. Reviewers asked if Washington Ave is still closed in the current concept. MVVA stated that its closure is still central to the plan.
17. Reviewers commented on the need for a defined line between city and NPS territory. For security and liability reasons it is preferred that a clearly visible demarcation in the ground plan (curb or graphic paver indicator) be included.

18. Reviewers inquired about the location of the bike lane relative to the pedestrian walk. MVVA stated that a separation of vehicles (cars and bikes) from pedestrians is desirable and that pedestrians will prefer the edge next to the embankment for viewing the river. Further, the bike lane concept would transition more smoothly into the bike network beyond the bridges.
19. Reviewers raised concerns that the circulation needs to be clearly defined for family users and the visually impaired. Reviewers commented that the zones with benches on either side of the central stage area create a pedestrian safe zone that is desirable.
20. Reviewers commented that it may be difficult to narrow the road if a “Circulator” is being added. MVVA indicated that the circulator vehicle will occupy the regular traffic lane with other vehicles and therefore should not require extra road width.
21. Reviewers expressed concern about the feasibility of the Circulator as an NPS operated program. Reviewers also discussed possible NPS operated electric-powered scooters / wheelchairs as a method of serving the impaired mobility visitor. MVVA and reviewers determined that feasibility of these items is a separate discussion.
22. Reviewers also stated concern that if the NPS operated the circulator, it should not conflict with local businesses if the circulator were moving west of Luther Ely Smith Square or north of Eads Bridge (outside of NPS land).
23. Reviewers expressed interest in additional planting along riverfront. MVVA indicated that there may be a way to find “pockets” for planting that can sustain the river’s force, and will consider feasibility of planting once modeling / marine review is done. Reviewers stated that there are options for planting or other furnishings that can be removed when flood conditions require.

C. South Gateway / Gondola Loading Platform

1. MVVA presented the current concept for the landscape surrounding the maintenance facilities on the JNEM grounds, while also recapping the original plan as designed during the competition stage, which suggested relocating the maintenance facility and parking building. MVVA has since reworked the scheme to work with the existing maintenance building and storage yard in place.
2. MVVA presented two interventions: a transformation of the landscape slope north of the maintenance facility and a transformation of the Poplar Street right of way.
3. The landscape concept for the landscape slope was presented as a dell landscape – a wooded valley that simultaneously functions as a screen of the maintenance facility, and creates an arrival experience out of the sloped accessible path leading to access the gondola platform. MVVA presented a preliminary planting scheme for the dell landscape plan allows for greater experiential variety and addresses safety concerns. A clear gap between the historic allee and new landscape would be maintained as a way to read new and historic layers of the landscape.
4. MVVA demonstrated the general balance of cut/fill for this proposal with an illustrative section showing areas of grade change along the dell path.
5. Concepts for the arrangement of NPS maintenance facilities were introduced, including a reconfigured driveway and retaining wall. Jim Jacobs (NPS) expressed concern with the realigned driveway and that the current configuration is strongly preferred as the separation of public access and secured areas for NPS maintenance storage and operations is easily maintained. MVVA to develop a proposal that works with a configuration more similar to the existing yard layout.

6. Reviewers asked about the durability of the proposed gabion or green retaining wall. MVVA to continue to explore material/manufacturer options and to report back on the longevity of these wall systems' durability and aesthetic quality from within the maintenance yard. MVVA states that a fence would be incorporated at the top of the wall.
7. The proposal for the south Gateway includes a stop for the circulator. This stop serves the gondola and access to the south overlooks and south pond landscape, activating an edge of the site that is currently seldom visited.
8. MVVA presented the siting for the gondola within the Poplar Street right of way. The NPS has endeavored to mediate the addition of the gondola on park land relative to park purpose, through a potential land swap with the City.
9. The proposed elevated platform of the gondola enables the alignment that negotiates rail easements, river navigation, and infrastructure effects, and minimizes impacts on the Poplar Street frontage of the NPS maintenance facility.
10. Reviewers questioned accessibility of the elevated platform, citing specific need for a short path of travel for emergency crews between Poplar Street where they would likely park an ambulance, and the platform. MVVA to relay this concern to the gondola designers and develop a proposal with some kind of elevator within the structure.
11. Reviewers asked for criteria regarding the operations of the gondola: the ability to stop the car for entry/exit for some visitors, how weather conditions affect its ability to run, clarification of the start and stop procedures for loading/unloading persons with disabilities.
12. Reviewers expressed concerns about the platform location, citing a need for 18-wheeler access, turning radius for maintenance vehicles, etc. MVVA demonstrated that the proposed layout does not impact the existing turning movements, and removes outside traffic from these areas.
13. Reviewers raised a concern that closing Washington Avenue on the north end of the site would increase use of vehicular traffic on Poplar Street, and that the proposal might not handle this traffic volume. MVVA to incorporate this configuration into the concurrent traffic studies and assess what opportunities exist for widening the right of way.
14. Reviewers asked about MVVA's accommodation of RV parking within the scheme and/or adjacent lots, citing high volumes during events. MVVA has not yet looked at these, as this part of the competition entry is not funded and RV parking was not part of the design team's scope. MVVA asked that a programmatic requirement be identified so that we are able to accommodate all necessary functions of the site, and suggested that this would be best as a more global discussion identifying all of the operation needs for the project.

ACTION ITEMS

1. *MVVA will reach out to representatives of events, operator police, and fire department to assess programmatic needs for the levee/riverfront.*
2. *MVVA will "test fit" these programmatic events. City to provide MVVA with permit records to assist in defining vendor and event needs.*
3. *MVVA will develop studies of bus loading and unloading zones. City and Client to assist in defining numbers and types of bus dropoff / pickup.*
4. *MVVA will study the demarcation line between NPS and city property on the river.*
5. *MVVA will provide data concerning the topography along Leonor K. Sullivan Boulevard.*

6. *MVVA will study an alternate layout for the maintenance yard and vehicle access within the South Gateway design to better accommodate visitor entry and NPS security needs.*
7. *MVVA will study material options for the proposed retaining wall at the maintenance facility, citing manufacturer data about material longevity.*
8. *MVVA will explore the incorporation of an elevator lift at the gondola platform.*
9. *MVVA will provide responses to operational concerns.*
10. *MVVA will further explore reconfiguration of Poplar Street relative to potential for increased traffic loading.*
11. *NPS will organize forum for discussion operational and financial feasibility of new visitation program: museum ticketing, gondola, circulator, RV accommodation, bus/coach accommodation, and electric scooters for people with disabilities.*