

Parks and Parkways Commission

June 4, 2018

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Scott Discon and the secretary called roll.

Present: Scott Discon, Lee Frederick, Anne Marie Fargason, Eric McQuiston and Nancy Clark

Absent: Marilyn Osborne and Karin Crosby

Also Present: Louise Scott, Planning Director; Catherine Casanova, Landscape Inspector

Discussion and Presentation of Causeway Underpass Project

Ms. Scott presented Andrew Doyle, Dana Brown and Associates, who would present an update on the Causeway Underpass plant design. Mr. Doyle presented the Master Plan stage of the project for the overall layout of the site in a schematic format. As an overview of the project there was a context map highlighting the major landmarks in the area showing the bicycle and pedestrian connections. Monroe Street and Mariner's Boulevard was the two terminus for the site. Within a 30 minute time people could walk from the lakefront to the site. The design would amplify the connections.

Site observations were along East Causeway Approach that there were no connections to Mariner's Boulevard or Monroe Street for pedestrians. With the lack of sunlight under the overpass areas and the rain water running off the bridges, the water hit the ground and ran with a lot of energy causing erosion. This prevented the grass from becoming established in a healthy way. There were existing catch basins that were over silted. A positive observation was there were healthy existing trees. There was a nice row of crepe myrtle trees that did not block sight or cause any danger. It created a defining edge for the site. The rain water passing through the joints was collecting directly near the foundation columns. One of the primary goals of the design was to address that problem. There was no direct connection to the site from the west side to Mariner's Boulevard. It was a similar case on Monroe Street, but there were crosswalks and sidewalks, which was a benefit.

The first thing Mr. Doyle noticed was the complexity of the vehicular circulation. West Causeway Approach cut through the center of the site. There was also East Causeway Approach and the Service Road on the edges of the site. While walking the site, it was easy to get disoriented. Another observation was that it was loud. Their goal was to introduce pedestrian circulation to the site that was clear and concise. They would minimize the points of entry using way finding to clearly indicate to the pedestrians where it was safe to enter the site and across the busy highways.

Ms. Clark asked if Mr. Doyle had considered the roundabout construction. Ms. Scott stated the City would be sending the shape files to Mr. Doyle. He had used the pdf version that had a CAD overlay of the aerial view, but he had not done a thorough analysis of the impacts. There would be minimal changes to the presentation to accommodate that construction. As they moved into the construction drawings there would be an overlay that would continue to evolve over time.

Ms. Fargason asked if the water runoff from the joints should be the Causeway Commission's responsibility. Ms. Scott said the Causeway Commission was allowing the City to plant within their right-of-way so they did not have a problem with the runoff. If the City had a design that mitigated part of the runoff, the Causeway Commission would be in agreement. They had reviewed the presentation and reiterated that this was the City's project. Ms. Clark said the plan served the City's interest for a better appearance. Ms. Scott said any structural issues of the overpass would not be the City's responsibility.

Mr. Doyle said their proposal was structural components, and they would work to minimize the impacts of that shortcoming. Circulation along Monroe Street contained crosswalks and signage. The site itself was a great open space which provided shade. The pedestrian circulation on the exterior sides of the Service Road should be taken into consideration. It appeared that the Causeway Commission had begun addressing the erosion problem at the base of the foundation by installing square pieces of concrete. There were existing catch basins throughout the site that could be better designed not to hold as much sediment. He also stated that much of the grass had eroded from standing water. The existing cast iron plant receiving the runoff was an interesting site and additional use of this plant may be considered on the site. He had observed an exposed foundation from the standing water located next to one of the columns.

Mr. Doyle had met with Ms. Scott and Ms. Casanova several weeks ago to discuss several concepts. The first concept (Alternative 1) was to collect water in the space between the overpasses and balance the cut with fill creating sloped landscapes for people to inhabit under the bridges. Another option was the inverse that was agreed did not work well. It would require excavation around the foundation of the bridge. The second option (Alternative 2) was a hybrid of a formulation of some storage under the overpasses and some places in between the exterior.

The plan indicated the existing sidewalks and crosswalks. There would be a pathway system spurring off of the existing paths to a series of pedestrian bridges with bio-retention areas of a 2-3' depth with a terraced side slope so it would not be just a wall. The site would be regraded with a collection zone for the stormwater. The plan was designed to encompass the existing drainage so the catch basins could be located in the depressed areas and operate as overflows. Circulation would be introduced to the site using softer materials that look more naturalistic.

There had been a discussion of integrating some of the pre-cast concrete from the Causeway into the plan to give a nod back to its history. One of the goals was to bring people to the site by creating sloped lawn areas to introduce seat walls. There were ideas to use interpretive signage to teach people the functions of the area. West Causeway sliced through the center of the site and would create another island. The idea was to have that as an aesthetic feature and not have people access it. Through the analysis, they determined there was not a safe way for people to cross and access that part of the site because there were no existing stop signs or lights. Everything past the off ramp would be act as a gateway. At this time, they were determining the placement. The thought was to use land forms and undulating signage walls to serve as a gateway into the City. There was a sidewalk shown on the east and west side of the site. They were trying to create a "U" of circulation.

Ms. Frederick confirmed there would be a gateway coming north and south with the wider area being accessible to people. Mr. Doyle said the reason for placing the undulating signage was that people were coming into the site on one side and exiting on the other side.

Ms. Clark asked with the installation of concrete walks, if there was a way to introduce some other type of material. Mr. Doyle said it could easily be a permeable material. He was concerned about it being ADA compliant. Previous concrete was a good material, but it did require more maintenance for vehicular use than pedestrian usage.

Mr. Discon said some of the citizen's concerns were with the roundabouts and the placement of the crosswalks. Ms. Scott said the roundabout engineer's responsibility was also to include pedestrian access. That design would need to be coordinated with this design. Ms. Clark said access would change, but Mr. Doyle's design would not change since it was an area outside of the roundabout. Mr. Doyle did like the idea of some type of signage in the middle of

the roundabout. Mr. Discon said north of the intersection by the Time Saver needed to be connected with the bridge on West Causeway Approach. He asked if this would be a part of the City's project. Ms. Scott said it was not part of this project, but as part of the roundabout project all of the connection would be considered. There was an east side path along West Causeway Approach that would soon begin construction. Ms. Frederick said pedestrians and cyclists must be mindful they were on the Service Road. Ms. Scott agreed that the West Causeway connection needed to be improved with the roundabout plans. Ms. Frederick said there was a section on East Causeway Approach where the cyclist must ride in the roadway to get to Monroe Street. Mr. Doyle said there was planting and bio-retention in the space between the two overpasses and people would see a line of tree tops.

In Alternative 2 there would be green borders to create an enclosure to define the edges with a strong line of trees. Similarly, the bio-retention would be taking advantage of the existing stormwater drainage. He suggested using crushed stone since it was a nice material with a concrete band to define the edges. There would be an amphitheater that stepped down to the bio-retention area to provide seating for people to look at the natural scenery. Ms. Clark confirmed that the people would be under the overpass. Mr. Doyle said it would be located in a middle and late afternoon shady area. Mr. Doyle said another suggestion was a 10' multi-use path that by code could fit both cyclists and pedestrians. On the west side, it would abut the street. He anticipated several model studies for signage, but at this time they were developing general concepts. Ms. Frederick asked to define signage. Mr. Doyle said it would have a legible print that was visible to a car travelling 40 miles per hour. They were thinking more naturalistic and freeform in keeping with the model. The signage would stand out, but not be distracting.

Rich Adamiak asked to consider skateboarding counter measures since the area appeared to be a magnet for skateboarders with the winding paths. Mr. Doyle said stone was not a skateboard type of surface. Mr. Discon was concerned in the area heading north since people parked their trucks in this area for the two parades as well as bringing cooking materials. Ms. Clark said according to the drawings, cars would not have access to this area. Mr. Discon had envisioned boulders or some material to keep the cars out of this area. Mr. McQuiston suggested low seating walls to prohibit entrance as a safety measure.

On the first cross section was through the pedestrian bridge and the depressed areas were not deep but would temporarily hold water for no longer than 48 hours. There was a concrete path that could be a number of materials. The goal was to balance the fill and be reshaped. There would be large trees between the overpasses to create a continuous canopy. There would be a strong edge with the bio-retention. There was a discussion if the Causeway Commission would feel that a tall tree would be a hazard. All of the species must be stormwater tolerant. This would be included in the construction drawings.

On the second cross section, cutting through the off ramp split the site to fit underneath it and the paths must accommodate it. There was bio-retention to manage the water from the ramp.

Alternative 2 had a cut in the same direction. There would not be any trees between, and the ramps up and down to the bio-retention area had an amphitheater feel. This created an opportunity to experience the site and include educational signage. Trees would line both sides of the site with a strong edge of planting. There would be numerous places to be in the shade under the overpass. The first planting design was trees in between the overpasses and the second design was trees on the outer edges. He suggested trees in between to create a green ceiling. Ms. Clark said it would help mitigate the sound. Mr. Doyle said it would be based on the Causeway's approval. Ms. Frederick suggested planting trees further apart or smaller trees as an alternative of no trees. Mr. Doyle would suggest shrubs if trees were not permitted that

was receptive of stormwater. He suggested art or way finding in the pedestrian areas. Ms. Frederick suggested art with the water running on it. Ms. Clark said it would create a symbol in differing scales to communicate the idea of the area. The concrete columns were bricked to create an aesthetic design. The original design included fountains and heavy landscape.

Mr. McQuiston asked about rain harvesting for irrigation. Mr. Doyle said he was open to that suggestion and a cistern would be easy to implement. Mr. McQuiston also suggested subsurface drainage on aqua blocks. Mr. Doyle said everyone wanted some nice lawn and would want to sit in some grass. They would do a sun study because the grass was not growing well because of the energy from the water hitting the ground. Mr. McQuiston said it was a result of not enough sunlight and not enough water, especially contouring the land. Mr. Discon asked if the run off could be directed off the bridge. Ms. Frederick suggested rock and seating areas. Mr. Doyle said it was a large area for crushed stone and he would make further suggestions. Mr. McQuiston asked what type of crushed stone. Mr. Doyle suggested decomposed granite which was not local and could be expensive. They often used crushed concrete since it was local. Mr. Frederick said crushed limestone could be another surface to be incorporated. Some of the area could be re-routed for a bio-retention. Mr. Doyle said culverts could be used to accomplish this. The cistern would be located under a brick paving area and use permeable surface above it. Mr. McQuiston said usually there was a manual switch to convert to municipal water. Mr. Doyle would discuss maintenance on the site elements at the next presentation. He commented for further discussion the consideration of some type of branding. The commission had discussed incorporating a style guide to carry through all of the projects. There were questions about lighting from a safety and security standpoint. Mr. Doyle said it would be a hierarchy of lighting with up lights on the trees for night. The commission would not like a lot of lighting and it would prefer not to up light the trees. Mr. Discon asked to see water instead of gravel, and incorporating iris plants for a more natural Louisiana planting. The commission agreed that all materials should be Louisiana available with it being educational. Mr. Doyle would provide estimates of cost as the project moved forward.

Discussion of Planting Plan for West Beach Parkway Median

Leslie and Susan Patterson were West Beach Parkway residents. They liked the idea of signage. Ms. Patterson suggested a uniform planting at each corner and to clean up what was existing. There were decaying railroad ties at Center Street that should be removed. The planting should be low maintenance. The center area should have space to be mowed. She was hopeful with the planting that it might slow the traffic down. The commission suggestions included heavy mulching to get rid of the weeds, a half circle of iris on the corners, and that every end be planted little different. There were white Natchez crepe myrtle trees along Monroe Street. Ms. Patterson said they had no specific ideas, but would like fresh planting and maintenance. Mr. Discon asked if the prison release workers worked along West Beach Parkways. Mayor Villere said with the release of prisoners the number of workers had shrunk.

Ms. Patterson said the workers used the weed eater to get rid of the weeds, and she had thanked the workers. It was an iconic street that needed maintenance. She had been told there was a shortage of workers for these positions and she suggested if the jobs went unfilled to use the money as a maintenance contract for the area. There was a discussion about signage placement with the suggestions being at the Monroe Street entrance. South Street, and at each end on West Beach Parkway. Mr. Adamiak said there was a model with the Welcome to Historic Old Mandeville sign. Mr. Fargason suggested a continuation with the white crepe myrtle trees.

Updates of Florida Street plantings

Mr. Discon said watering was the issue. Ms. Scott said the interns would begin watering this week. Mr. Discon said he also noticed several trees could move and some trees were dying because of the soil conditions. He asked if Mr. Brumfield could add soil to help their survival. Mr. Adamiak said there were 12 dead trees and several were leaning. Ms. Scott said she would have Mr. Brumfield check the trees.

Update on Marigny Avenue Edible Forest

Mr. McQuiston was working to convert the drawings.

Monroe Street Entrance Planting

Ms. Casanova said the back flow preventers broke with the cold weather with estimates being obtained and finding a vendor to fix it. This would be handled by the Public Works Department. There would be a mix of plants that would be put in the ground in the next week and would be watered. Mr. Discon asked to tweak the rose garden and gazebo with mulch.


Staff Update

- Ms. Fargason asked were the flowers changed on East Causeway and Monroe Street. Mr. Discon said there was an accident that destroyed the planting.
 - Butterfly Garden/Kierr Garden – Ms. Casanova said she was reviewing the contract to assure that it included the butterfly garden. Ms. Clark provided the history that it was a donation with the City agreeing to plant and maintain the garden.
 - Pottery Oak – Ms. Clark had received a telephone call asking about the natural rope for the bollards. She asked if there could be maintenance in this area and suggested the installation of a historical marker.
 - Ms. Frederick asked Mayor Villere how to solve the Public Works Department's problem of the understaffing of employees. She stated that the employees worked hard at their jobs. Mayor Villere said he would be requesting an increase in salaries under the budget. Mr. McQuiston said there was a program utilizing community service people. Mayor Villere said the City was exploring that option with the Sheriff's Office, but the biggest problem was people passing the required test. There would also be a request to the Civil Service Board to eliminate the written test and add a practical test of the work to be performed.
 - Mr. Discon asked if the water tank would be remaining on the truck. Ms. Scott said it would remain on the truck at this time but could only be filled to half of its capacity because of the weight. Mr. Discon suggested requiring water connections at the front of each property.
- Richard Adamiak said the City placed three braces on the Lady of the Lake live oak tree. He was an advocate of restricting climbing on and placing hammocks on the trees. He suggested posting a sign on the braced Lady of the Lake and the Belle of the Ball trees. He was preparing a presentation for a tagging mechanism for the trees. Ms. Scott said she would work with Mr. Adamiak on the signage.

Ms. Clark moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Fargason and was unanimously approved.



Lbri Spranley, Secretary



Scott Discon, Chairman
Parks and Parkways Commission