

Summary of Story Mill Community Workshop

February 7, 2013, Emerson Cultural Center, Bozeman, MT

The Trust for Public Land hosted a Story Mill project community workshop on February 7th in the ballroom at the Emerson Cultural Center. Over 140 residents came to share their ideas and discuss the future of the 61-acre site. Deb Love, Northern Rockies director for The Trust for Public Land welcomed everyone. Then Ben Lloyd of Comma Q architecture shared a virtual flyover tour of the site, and Maddy Pope, Story Mill project manager for the Trust, discussed the project components and introduced the discussion leaders.

Kelley Hart, the workshop facilitator – also with The Trust for Public Land – explained that the workshop was being divided into five break-out groups, which reflected findings from an informal email survey to which 690 residents had responded in late December and early January. Over the next hour and a half, workshop participants discussed the project in break-out groups. They were able to choose three of the following five topic groups to participate in: Recreation and Park Design, Water and Wetlands, Trails and Connectivity, Local Foods and Sustainable Agriculture, Redevelopment and Affordable Housing. There was also a hosted table for general comments, questions, and concerns. *A summary of those discussions is provided below.* To conclude the workshop, the whole group reconvened with facilitators sharing a recap from each of the break-out discussions.

In sum, people came to share their experiences, interests and future vision for the Story Mill site. The wide-ranging and lively discussions weighed the needs and benefits of competing park uses, the challenges of balancing conservation and recreation in future management, the importance of the site's wetlands and rivers for enjoyment and water quality, the opportunity for new trail connections, present day opportunities linking back to the agricultural history of the site, and, finally, how private redevelopment of a portion of the former trailer court might complement the park proposal. While there were wide-ranging ideas about what types of activities should be included in the park and how to set priorities among the projects' multiple community benefits, there was overwhelming support for the idea of a new city park at the Story Mill site. General sentiment was that:

- the Story Mill site should be revitalized as a flagship park for the Bozeman community;
- the site's rivers and wetlands complex are a valuable community asset that should be protected;
- future management of the park should place a priority on the protection of habitat for fish and wildlife that utilize and depend upon the area.

The Trust for Public Land wishes to thank everyone who attended the workshop and/or completed the survey and to acknowledge the group facilitators: Pat Byorth of Greater Gallatin Watershed Council, John Muhlfeld of River Design Group, Heather Grenier and Tracy Menez of Human Resources Development Council, Rob Pertzborn and Susan Riggs of Intrinsic Architecture, Penelope Pierce, Peter Brown and Gary Vodehnal of Gallatin Valley Land Trust, Troy Scherer of Design 5, and Sarah Alexander of Market Day Foods.

Summary of Small Group Sessions, Consolidated by Table Topics

In the notes below we have endeavored to accurately capture the many diverse – and sometimes conflicting -- ideas and opinions expressed by the participants in the break-out discussion groups. There were also a number of comments and ideas provided in written form and those are not captured here, but have been reviewed and will be considered for site planning as well.

Trail Discussions: focused on both trail network development within the proposed new park and expanded connections with the Story Mill Spur Trail to other areas from the Story Mill site.

Ideas

- Accessing the trails:
 - Need parking (could be several small or one big lot) – use areas already impacted before building hardscape
 - Have bus stops that are connected into trails
 - Access to southwest corner (Bond Street) – are there enough places to park?
 - Have bike racks at nexus of commuter trails and recreation trails so that bikes don't end up on recreation trails
 - Have handicap accessible trails
 - Consider elevated trails that create wildlife viewing opportunities. Could be a viewing platform
 - Host community races
- Trail uses:
 - There is a history of equestrian use on the property and it should continue to help connect equestrian use from town to other places
 - There should be occasional overlooks for limited views/access to stream
- Trail type: [Note: 3 types of trails: (1) wide- 8 – 10 feet, often paved and can be used for transportation; (2) 6 foot wide, i.e. current Story Mill Trail, city mandated, or (3) narrow trails, single track that are appropriate for certain kinds of recreation.]
 - What kinds of trails? Foot trails v. bike trails (delineated)
 - Would like multiple use trails – built to accommodate bikes, skis, horses, and dogs
 - Would like to have single track trails along with paved trail options
 - Have bike lanes along Bridger Drive/ should be separated use
 - Consider boardwalks through wetlands that don't shade out plants (low impact)
- Potential trail routes through the Story Mill Property:
 - Trail along river, circles around wetlands, a “Stream Corridor Trail”
 - Connector trails from developed site (north end) so that community and housing are open and integrated
- Destinations to connect to:
 - Food Bank to community gardens, Library, Boys & Girls Club, other parks, the Fairgrounds, M-Trail and Drinking Horse, Main Street, commercial areas

Related issues/concerns:

- Have a strip of land preserved on both sides of the river
- Would like to have a park and ride and/or Streamline Bus connection to Bridger Bowl
- Access for boats to get to the river
- Solving the dog dilemma: Dog/wildlife balance. Concerned about having off-leash dogs in the park because of potential negative impacts on water quality and wildlife. Certain trails should be closed to dogs. Limit dog access for wildlife safety – value wildlife and natural habitat over dogs and recreation. Consider having a designated dog park (South East corner) and close parts of the park to dogs that are off-leash.
- Involve MDOT in these conversations regarding highway expansion along Rouse - Rouse Avenue improvement with bike lanes and sidewalk
- Bike path connecting to Oak Street (8 – 10 foot paved)
- Could put a bike park (total venue) in non-used landfill area
- Improved connection to Snowfill may be needed if the Story Mill area is developed further
- Concerned about trails along streams having an adverse impact to wildlife and water quality. Could resolve by having trails away from creek because of wildlife and water quality impact concerns. Have limited access to stream points. However, people want to see wildlife.
- Look at FEMA maps and don't put trails in the floodplain.
- Songbirds nest on the property because there are no trails currently – trails should be limited in sensitive areas. Need to balance people with needs of nature. Limit/mitigate access by design (make more rustic where don't want people). The trails use should be focused and signage can help.
- Have minimum invasive signs (maps)
- Some trails may need to be closed at certain times of the year, e.g. nesting season.
- Crossing from Story Mill to Bridger Creek over Bridger Drive – it needs improving, especially if Bridger Drive is widened. Needs to be safer. Consider a signal.
- Consider long-term maintenance/management of trails
- Have fewer bridges across the rivers
- Think BIG picture for Bozeman, not just this particular project

Development and Affordable Housing Discussions: focused on potential redevelopment of sustainable, mixed income housing including affordable units on all or a portion of the former Bridger View Trailer Court located along Bridger Canyon Drive.

YES to housing

- Smart infill location
- Better to develop in town than outside City Limits or in Belgrade
- Should replace stock of 99 affordable units (trailers) lost to speculation
- Mixed income and mixed use a benefit to the community
- Land has already been disturbed therefore it is a good location for housing

NO to Housing

- Development would limit visibility of park thereby limiting the ability of the park to become a “flagship” city park. Have this be the Central Park of the Gallatin Valley
- Should remain “open space” to preserve rural character
- Should be developed as athletic fields to meet existing community demand
- Development could have negative traffic impacts on existing development

The majority of topics discussed can be categorized as follows:

1) Neighborhood Design

- Density is a relative term (something is more or less dense than something else)
- Generally more support for the less dense plan with more detached units
- Element of unknown with multi-family option
- Future neighborhood should include a variety of options including:
 - Modular Homes
 - ADUs
 - Live/Work
 - Mixed Use
 - Commercial (Grocery, Laundry Mat, etc.) – Creating complete neighborhood with neighborhood necessities through commercial component. Consider tying gardens to canning operation, grocery store, market, etc.
- Ensure neighborhood parks connect to larger park – consider decreasing density and enlarging central spine to address visibility concern
- Consider shrinking the development footprint away from the riparian area. Consider the 500 year floodplain.
- Consider unconventional housing types as examples to expand possibilities (e.g. demonstration housing). Have a nationally-based company use space as a residential demonstration model type
- Consider Bridger Bowl employee housing
- Consider extended-stay lodging
- Connections to Boys and Girls Club key

2) Transportation Networks

- Create a multi-modal “hub” with bus stop, trails and parking for Bridger Bowl (park & ride)

- Concern about traffic impacts on bottleneck at train tracks
- Traffic will have significant impacts on existing neighborhoods; need a traffic study.
- Transit needs to be expanded (service) into area
- Road should connect to Hillside Lane to improve accessibility for potential future commercial node

3) Affordable Housing

- Should be mixed income neighborhood to ensure affordable units are unrecognizable or indistinguishable from market units
- If affordable units are developed, should be preserved long term through a land trust, deed restriction or other appropriate means
- A mix of owner-occupied and rental is more desirable than all rentals to ensure a vested long-term commitment to neighborhood
- Consider incorporating “self-help” programs where owners participate in light construction, landscaping, etc.

Questions

- Will the development generate tax revenue?
- How do you define “affordability”? – e.g. below \$40k median income has greatest need in Bozeman
- Has the best location for affordable housing been considered?
- Has supported and/or assisted housing considered?
- Has co-op housing been considered?
- Is green/sustainability inevitable?
- Are there a minimum number of units needed to make the development viable?
- Can we afford to build a larger park?
- Have off-site infrastructure improvements been considered – e.g. upgrade transportation routes?
- How do you attract higher income into mixed-income neighborhoods?

Local Foods & Sustainable Agriculture Discussions: focused on programs for new park to amplify and connect to ongoing community support of local foods and sustainable agriculture.

Ideas for types of farming and gardening that could be on-site

- Educational farming - Have a teaching facility and infrastructure for hands-on learning opportunities for kids and adults
 - Involve 4-H, Boys & Girls Club, and link to schools
 - Demonstration farming that can be replicated in people's homes/backyards/gardens. Possibly create an "urban homestead" that demonstrates replicable practices, such as high density gardening, bee keeping, permaculture (self-maintained horticultural systems modeled from natural ecosystems), forest/edible plants, water catchment, composting, or small livestock.
- Historical celebration: connecting site to past and present farming activities in the Gallatin Valley and Bridger Canyon
- Food production: particularly for underserved populations (e.g. Food Bank) via farm production, gleaning, or donations (possibly mandatory) from community plots
 - Food Bank goes through 60,000 lbs. of produce a year and could use even more. Would be interested in all opportunities, including gleaning

Other related ideas

- Have a greenhouse. Could be methane powered. Could be hydroponic
- Possible LEED certified facility
- Have a community toolshed (pole barn), with communal ownership/equipment sharing
- Could make use of the existing structures with agriculture/gardening use – such as for education, gathering space, or for housing farm animals
- Have edible landscaping or orchards
- Have a farm stand
- Could do a produce exchange
- Have affordable housing gardening plots
- Teach a master gardening class – would need an area at least 45 feet by 30 feet for a teaching garden, it could be staffed by MSU
- Possibly incorporate agriculture into any development that happens on the property – e.g. roof gardens, in-ground gardens, vertical gardens, etc.
- Could have hoop houses or row covers
- Use WWOOF Interns (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms)
- Have a processing or kitchen facility that is "certified" – a community-owned or co-op ownership format. Example: Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center (Lake County).
- Have a wash facility to clean produce

Potential location

- Near the pond, the food bank, on the former trailer court site, or near the Boys & Girls Club.

Potential resources

- Food Corps volunteers as possible resource
- Harness knowledge and experience of retired population with farming background
- Harness the energy and leadership of young people
- Coordinate with City of Bozeman's climate action plan and integrated water resource plan
- See Farm-based Education Association (<http://www.farmbasededucation.org/>)
- See Shelburne Farms (Vermont)
- Townes' Harvest (MSU) farm (could be complementary)
- There is already an MSU masters project on setting up an NGO that could be related
- MSU is hiring a small farms expert who could potentially be a resource
- USDA/farm bill may have grant opportunities

Constraints or practical considerations

- 61 acres may be too small, given all the other needs/ideas for the property
- Consider the infrastructure required – would need sturdy fences to keep out the deer and bears
- Would need machinery to service the farming
- Might need a farm manager
- May need a place for food washing and distribution
- If helping Food Bank is an objective, would need to produce significant quantities, which could require a lot of land and maintenance
- May need a water source
- If you want to have rentable plots would need a larger area – ½ acre to 2 acres. Though you could start with micro-plots
- 5-7 acres may cost \$100,000 - \$200,000
- May need to phase the gardening effort. Start small and have it grow over time.
- Make it accessible

Recreation and Park Design Discussion: examined potential recreational uses and facilities and how to strike the appropriate balance between public enjoyment and resource conservation in the proposed new park.

Amenities/features of interest for a park

- Would like to see this site primarily as a nature sanctuary with passive recreation/trails:
 - Keep trails away from restored areas and from pond. Important not to build park infrastructure within the 100 year floodplain
 - Including former trailer park section of property is important to make this a flagship park and might allow for some more developed recreation while protecting wetlands sections of property for passive park use – protect beautiful trees in front section
 - Consider elevated platforms / boardwalks so that the site is experienced from a safe distance
 - Close trails or certain areas at certain times of the year to promote animal health
 - Restore functioning floodplains, wetlands, rivers
 - Dogs must be controlled so as to minimize impact to rivers, wetlands and wildlife; perhaps there can be a dog area – but hard to manage
 - Limit the human footprint
 - Limit vehicle traffic / limit impact to few areas
 - L Street parcel is a critical wildlife corridor connecting to the M and Drinking Horse areas and should not be developed for parking or other park facilities
 - Have trails that don't interfere with natural functions
- Consider multi-use facilities, e.g. those that can accommodate all of these:
 - Amphitheater for performances
 - Soccer (Need approximately 2 acres per soccer field)
 - Climbing / Ice Climbing
 - Maybe some practice turf, but not developed fields so you can minimize impacts on wetlands and wildlife.
- Incorporate educational components:
 - A designated interpretive experience with kiosks and signage
 - Consider Education Center in one of the existing buildings
 - Coordinate with partners, such as: Montana Outdoor Science School, Audubon Society, Greater Gallatin Watershed Council, Montana State University, local schools, MOSS and other outdoor education programs
- Playgrounds or play spaces:
 - Multiple locations for playgrounds would spread them across the park
 - Not too many play grounds, better for the park to be an experience that connects kids with nature
 - There are very broad ideas about play spaces and creative play that don't necessarily mean nature versus playgrounds, but can meld both
- Create a water trail for fishermen and floaters. East Gallatin River could be part of Blue Trail designation that merges recreation and conservation. Appropriate access to rivers to enhance fishing opportunities should be pursued
- Incorporate public art – be creative about play areas – splash park, play spaces that combine art and water
- Foster a multi-use connection for equestrian users through site (e.g. help equestrians connect to the fairgrounds)

- Create a park and ride and maybe a Streamline bus connection for Bridger Bowl and other Bridger Canyon destinations

Accessibility

- Make the park accessible / useful to Boys & Girls Club, such as with soccer / field sports and a natural area
- Access should include: ADA accessibility to at least portions of the new park, water / river access, and wildlife access

Park v. affordable housing - variety of opinions expressed

- Keep whole property as park so that it can serve as Crown Jewel of County. Need to include the trailer court site in the park to really achieve a flagship city park.
- Inclusion of former Bridger Trailer Court would give the park visibility from Bridger Canyon Drive
- Must have adequate open space for neighborhood
- Trailer Court site has beautiful trees and is important for wildlife; should be part of the park not redeveloped
- Perhaps the issue of affordable housing can be addressed off site
- Tough decision because the community also needs affordable housing
- Story Mill site offers community affordable and accessible recreation, which is also important
- Mixed income development would be good

Concerns

- Intruding on wildlife
- Having too many trails
- Supporting gardening is likely to be demanding (e.g. water, soil, access, storage) and would have to be protected from wildlife with sturdy fencing.
- Safety: Need a safe atmosphere for walking and leisure activities. Don't create dangerous places for people to hide or conduct illegal activities.
 - There is a homeless population nearby
 - Concerns about safe water access
 - Will the trails be safe in terms of uses and speeds traveled?
 - Will the park be lit at night?
- Take care with multi-modal transportation. Could end up being too many cars, lights and people
- Make sure to provide adequate parking
- Block the warehouses so they aren't visible from the park
- Buffer park activities from adjacent roads
- Show surrounding parks when planning
- Need to address the trail crossing at Bridger Drive – currently dangerous. Also the bridges on Griffin Drive will need to be updated

Questions

- Can we cross railroad corridor? What is the status of land banking?
- Where can public art be installed?
- How much lighting will be needed? What will be the effect on wildlife? And on safety?
- How are priorities determined?
- If there is a sports field, would it be for multiple uses? How much parking would be provided?

Water and Wetlands Discussions: examined potential benefits and scope of wetlands and streambed restoration for the site.

Interests

- Water quality:
 - Universal support for enhancing water quality: restore floodplains and river function, improve wetlands
 - Would like to minimize associated activities (trails or development) that would negatively impact water quality – do any development (trails or development) in responsible manner. E.g. Buffer the river from development at the north end of the site
 - Remove bridges where possible to restore flow capacity. Currently, the 3 bridges are problematic, especially the piers on the railroad bridge are causing hydrological problems. Complicated by ownership interests and need for emergency vehicle access
 - With respect to the pond, consider a viewing platform or raised boardwalks; but be careful to restrict dog access; and design a system for low maintenance costs
 - Expanding area for restoration: Secure south strip along East Gallatin and acquire easement on north floodplain to help reduce impacts from stockyard/erosion/fill
 - Would like more marsh wetlands in the Northeast part of property
 - The trailer park flooded historically and quite a bit of floodplain between the trailer park and the river was filled. Floodplain function could be restored there.
- Wildlife:
 - Promote wildlife and wildlife watching. Minimize high impact uses - Keep as natural as possible, i.e. low impact. Don't encourage too much use
 - Bird habitat is an important component of the property, especially nesting habitats. Focus on emergent wetlands and pond for nesting habitats. Protecting nesting might require seasonal restrictions for birds nesting in wetlands.
 - Local Audubon would like to work with partners to design and place kestrel and bluebird nesting boxes. One recommended installing roost sites for bats in the riparian zone.
 - Fishing enhancement / water trail development - excited about enhanced angling opportunities, especially for kids and handicapped
 - Beavers and deer can be both an asset and a problem. Consider their potential effects.
 - Currently the property supports nearly a monoculture of reed canary grass and tansy – plan to control and manage weeds, must be done early in process and will probably require chemical treatments.
 - Would like to see regeneration of cottonwoods
 - Think about this area holistically, and about the connection options
- Trail location: Difference of opinion as to whether there should be a trail along the river. Some people said they would like a trail along the river, and it could be closed seasonally if needed to minimize impact, others opposed the concept of a river trail, as fear it would generate too much traffic. If there is a river trail, it would need to be very carefully developed/located

- Accessibility: Difference of opinion as to how accessible the river/wetlands should be for humans. Some people said they would like fishing accessibility, an opportunity to use the pond, access places for water quality monitoring/stream sampling, or access places for kayakers or floaters. Some mentioned the need to make amenities ADA accessible – equally accessible. Others said there should be only very limited access because of water quality concerns.

Concerns/questions

- Concerns about parking, traffic, and boating access.
- Don't like the proposed parking location
- Concern that housing development and soccer fields could negatively impact water quality
- Where will the money come from for restoration activities?
- Could be expensive to maintain wetlands and vegetation
- Concerned about dog activity around this open, sensitive water
- What would be the bridge's effects on flooding? The width of the river narrows approaching Bridge Drive. The bridge has exacerbated flooding in the past.
- Does the city require a setback for trails? 100 feet?
- Concerned about levee removal impacts to surrounding properties
- There are lots of deer on the property. Will wetland restoration push deer into neighborhoods?
- Will it be safe or even possible to boat given the low flow conditions?
- Concerned with controlling geese populations and impact on vegetation and restoration efforts.
- How will the stockyards be used in future and how will that use affect the Story Mill property?
- Contact ID Pole along with DEQ and EPA regarding superfund issues.

Potential resources

- NRCS offers assistance, such as technical peer review, Wetlands Reserve Program, EQIP, and wetland mitigation funding
- Tie in with Bozeman Creek Enhancement Project strategic plan, and think of how this project fits in with broader planning efforts with the City of Bozeman, e.g. water plan
- Recent wetland training course concepts can be integrated in plan
- MSU
- Could host international bird day festival – they have wetlands/wildlife special events.
- Work with adjacent landowners like Bridger Golf area; Bridger Canyon Drive; ID Post and Pole
- What effects ID Pole might have on the project? Is there any potential funding opportunities related to Superfund? Gallatin Local Water Quality District?

Other topics

- Would like some interpretive signage but not a lot – strike a balance. Minimize the number of interpretive signs and kiosks to maintain a very natural state/landscape
- Would like to see design for low maintenance costs
- Would like to see natural science curriculum
- When restoring the wetlands, install piezometers to monitor groundwater levels. Raising the water table could affect neighboring properties.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS TABLE

Comments:

- It will be difficult – and important – to decide how to prioritize the water and water quality interests of the property v. the trail interests. A neighbor of the property said there is a lot of wildlife on the property currently. They are worried about trespassing and dogs if this is turned into a park.
- Floaters may be a source of conflict.
- How will you balance the need for an urban park with the needs of the riparian habitat?
- Dogs and horses will be a challenge. Connect wetlands restoration to MSU – could do overall monitoring. They have institutional knowledge.
- Perhaps develop a Friends organization to deal with weeds, litter, etc.

COMMENTS DURING THE GROUP REPORT BACK

- Re: local food: one idea is to give priority for plots to beginning farmers (commercial)
- Question about the soil – will it support farming? Deb Love: TPL did testing of soil (Phase 1 and Phase 2), which determined that, while there is pollution nearby, the site is fine. We would advise against wells.
- General question: How much money will TPL be requesting from the City bond for this project? Deb Love: We will make a request to the city for them to acquire the property from us for a new park. The amount of the request and specific acreage has yet to be determined, but will be based upon a transparent, fair market value appraisal. TPL plans to sell the land to the city for an amount equal to or less than our purchase price and will work to leverage the request from the city by bringing funding from other sources to help defray public costs for park development, restoration of the property and long-term stewardship.
- Idea for affordable housing component: have some buildings/housing on the site that are demonstrations from commercial builders. Perhaps builders will pay to be able to have their demonstrations on the site and that will offset the costs of the park project.
- Idea for water and wetlands component: consider a raised boardwalk system (10-15 feet or more above ground) that is well-done and artistic so that it looks good and keeps people above the sensitive resources.
- Question for TPL: Is the idea put forward about having affordable housing coming from a place of wanting to do something morally right or is it about recouping costs of buying the land and having part of it as a park? Deb Love: right now we are simply exploring all sorts of options.
- One member of the audience suggested that he and others would like to get out on the property – will TPL consider giving tours? TPL representative, Maddy Pope, said yes, be in touch if you would like a tour.