

Tahquitz Creek Parkway Neighborhood Beautification and Pathway Plan Sunrise Avenue to S. Palm Canyon

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History:

Many long time residents remember when the Tahquitz Creek Channel was a natural creek bed; a place where people picnicked and enjoyed the natural landscape. Today, the creek channel along the north side is a lovely parkway, used by pedestrians, bicyclists, skaters and dog owners and enjoyed for its paved pathway and attractive landscaping.

On the south side of the creek channel lies the proverbial ugly stepsister, noted for its dying and remnant oleander shrubs, an unsightly and unhealthy amount of dog waste, homeless hideouts, litter, dumped household goods, and unheeded no trespassing signs.

From the time TRENNO neighbors first started to come together to form a neighborhood organization the condition of the south side and lower portions of the creek channel have been a constant topic of concern. In early 2005, the TRENNO advisory council contacted Riverside County about holding a neighborhood clean up day and was discouraged because of liability issues. One neighbor reported that several years ago City staff had projected a cost of \$60,000 to bring the south side of the creek channel up to par with the north parkway. Not, surprisingly homeowners were discouraged from further attempts to gain improvement in this area, although a few residents have recently taken it upon themselves to remedy sections of the landscaped berm across from their homes.

At the TRENNO annual meeting in November, 2005, Creek channel issues again emerged. David Ready was in attendance and stated that neighborhood residents and city staff should get together at the Creek to review conditions and determine what could be done to meet the neighborhood's concerns.

The TRENNO advisory council has made the Creek area a priority issue, as it is one of the neighborhood's special assets and an area of ongoing concern for residents *throughout* the neighborhood. For TRENNO, developing and implementing a plan to improve the condition of Tahquitz Creek will be a tangible accomplishment that will go far in providing a neighborhood parkway and bringing the community together.

To prepare for a meeting with City staff, in December 2005, several TRENNO members walked and photographed the Creek area to fully identify and clarify the neighborhood's issues and concerns, and to make recommendations for how to improve this area.

S. Riverside Berm and Access Roadway

- Along S. Riverside Way, between Sunrise and the pedestrian bridge at S. Camino Real, a 4 foot high landscape berm was installed many years ago and planted with oleander. Over time the oleander shrubs have become diseased. Some of the dead shrubs have been cut back, with the stumps left behind. Others are dying. Many are still in good health, but will eventually succumb to disease.
- The watering system for the berm is controlled by several manually operated valves. Maintenance contractors periodically turn the water on and leave it on for an extended period. There are many instances of leaks and other signals of a decaying system.
- Because much of the planted area is unsightly due to the condition of the oleander shrubs, a few residents have taken it upon themselves to beautify their section of the berm, planting and hand-watering a variety of plants, including invasive species.
- Large piles of dead oleander trimmings and other vegetative debris accumulate behind the berm on the access road. The City currently does not have access to the roadway and so it is difficult to it to maintain this area.
- The asphalt berm between Sunrise and the concrete section (several hundred feet) is crumbling and losing its ability to hold back soil. Weeds and grasses are gaining a foothold within the cracks, contributing to the blighted look of the area. The concrete section of berm west of the Camino Real pedestrian bridge is in excellent condition.
- Dog feces are abundant all along the access roadway, most especially along the section between the pedestrian bridge and S. Palm Canyon.
- West of the pedestrian bridge there are more divergent species of trees and plants. Much of the vegetation along this section is dying or dead. Chunks of asphalt and cement have been dumped in this area.
- An above ground water pipe is lying in the west end plantings, across the street from First Church parking lot. Sprinklers and water pipes are old and broken between foot-bridge and First Church.
- Litter is found throughout the entire area.
- Tall and unkempt oleander shrubs create cover and camouflage for sleeping. During our walk, one person was found asleep in the shrubbery not far from Sunrise Way; evidence of another area that had been used for sleeping was found close to the pedestrian bridge.



Project Goals, Partners and Funding Sources

• **BEAUTIFICATION**

- South Riverside landscaping
 - Develop landscape plan emphasizing low maintenance, native and/or drought-tolerant shrubs/plants. Preserve established trees and compatible shrubs/plants.
 - Remove dead and dying oleanders;
 - Remove decaying asphalt and grade berm to reduce the slope and prevent erosion
 - Install new irrigation system.
- Reduce trash in creek channel and along pathways by installing trash cans at pedestrian bridge and engaging neighborhood volunteers in Creek channel clean up events.
- Discourage homeless occupation by maintaining open spaces under and between plants and shrubbery and regular maintenance and cleans ups of Creek channel basin.
- Paint the foot bridge and concrete walls along County access Rd. as community project with assistance from Public Works department.
- Work with Mesquite Village developers to landscape section abutting their property.

Note: Parks and Recreation has installed trash cans on the north and sides of the footbridge. The foot bridge will be painted by the City and community volunteers this fall.

• **WELCOME AND PROVIDE FOR DOGS AND DOG OWNERS**

- Although there are signs posted on both sides of the creek channel citing the no dogs allowed ordinance, we have observed that most people who use the parkway and the south side roadway are walking their dogs. We suggest that people be allowed to walk their dogs in this area, and that the city takes proactive steps to control the amount of waste by installing doggie-doo depositories on both sides of the Creek channel.

Note: The Parks and Recreation department installed signs allowing dogs on leash in parkway and , installed plastic bag dispensers and receptacles for dog waste.

• **RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

- Open up County roadway for pedestrian and biking use. This is a wonderful opportunity to link both sides of the Creek channel with existing bike and walking paths that lead to downtown and mountain trails and to Tahquitz Canyon Visitors Center. Establish new Agua Caliente Heritage Pathway
 - Riverside County Flood Control has acknowledged that a bike/walking path is an appropriate and acceptable use on County controlled land. It is prepared to allow such use if the City provides indemnification.
 - Create path using crushed rock for easier and less costly installation and maintenance.
 - Improve and/or establish linkages with north ped/bike path and new south ped/bike path with existing bike paths and trails, e.g., Heritage Trail, Lykken trail head at Ramon, and Tahquitz Creek Loop.
 - Establish new Indian Heritage pathway linking Agua Caliente Cultural Museum, Tahquitz Creek Parkway, Tahquitz Canyon and Indian Canyons.

- **ENHANCEMENTS**

- Rename area to Tahquitz Creek Parkway
- Secure formal adoption of Parkway as City park
- Develop and install interpretive signage along paths and in Parkway describing natural and cultural heritage attributes, identify native plants and traditional uses, acknowledge funding partners and Friends organization
- Install public amenities such as seating, game tables, and public art
- Create small gathering place at southwest end of foot bridge
- Create enhanced entrance area at S. Riverside and Sunrise Way
- Create landscaped focal points at Hermosa (south side) and entry statements at both ends of foot bridge

- **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

- Involve the Tahquitz River, Deepwell and Warm Sands residents in planning project
- Establish and promote a friends organization to lead periodic clean ups and other maintenance activities; help raise funds for Parkway project and maintenance
- Build awareness of trail linkages and recreational opportunities throughout the community, including visitors
- Engage local students in community projects and use Creek area as outdoor classroom

- **POTENTIAL PARTNERS & FUNDING SOURCES**

- City of Palm Springs, Parks and Recreation
- Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District
- Riverside County Parks and Recreation
- Private individual and corporate donors
- Neighborhood Organizations:
 - Tahquitz River Estates Neighborhood Organization
 - Deepwell Estates Neighborhood Organization
 - Warm Sands Neighborhood Organization
- Coachella Valley Association of Governments
- Agua Calliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
- Cahuilla Elementary School
- Desert Water Agency
- Grants

ACTION STEPS:

1. Communicate vision and need to stakeholders and secure commitment (in process)
2. Assess trail linkages and fully flesh out long term vision and phased plan for the Creek channel area, including landscape plan for S. Riverside and maintenance along N. Riverside (in process)
3. Work with Parks and Recreation to build plan and budget (in process)
4. Meet with funding partners to identify level of commitment (in process)
5. Secure approval from Parks Commission and City Council
6. Build public awareness and develop fundraising campaign
7. Build Tahquitz Creek Friends organization to promote the project, conduct regular clean ups, raise funds, and take on other projects to benefit the area (in process – Tahquitz Creek Yacht Club, see below)
8. Secure funds and landscape contractors;
9. Implement beautification and trails projects
10. Celebrate and Dedicate
11. Maintain and monitor

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS:

1. Deepwell Estates and Warm Sands Neighborhood Organizations have become partners in the development and implementation of the Parkway plan;
2. A meeting was held with Mayor Pro Tem Ginny Foat, City Manager David Ready, representatives of Riverside County Flood Control District, Supervisor Wilson’s office, Parks and Recreation, Public Works and the Neighborhoods to establish lines of communication, explore uses for the area as acceptable to the County and City, identify funding opportunities and determine next steps. David Ready charged the neighborhoods with developing a phased plan to present to the Parks and Recreation Commission and the City Council.
3. The Desert Horticultural Society and Native Plant Society have volunteered to help develop the landscape plan that utilizes native and/or hybrid native species. The concept is to create a demonstration level landscaping scheme that will be water efficient and very low maintenance.
4. The conceptual plan was presented to the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians Planning Commission. Commissioners approved the Conceptual Plan presented and will recommend consideration to Tribal Council.
5. The first meeting of the Tahquitz Creek Yacht Club was held to establish the purpose of the organization and plan two community projects to take place in November.

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