

Barton Springs Bathhouse Interpretive Experience

Key Stakeholders Kickoff and Visioning Session

14 November 2019

Agenda

1. Introductions (name/role/department)

- *PARD*
- *Partners*
- *Design team*

2. Meeting Purpose

- *Interpretive plan design brief*
- *Exhibit space program*
- *Public participation*

3. Interpretive Planning Team

4. Project Context

5. Confirmations as Design Brief

- *Goals*
- *Objectives*
 - *Learning*
 - *Understand importance of protecting groundwater resources*
 - *Learn what types of activities negatively affect groundwater and Barton Springs*
 - *Provided with info about what they can do to preserve this natural resource*
 - *Emotional*
 - *Majority will want to preserve Barton Springs*
 - *Majority will feel a connection to groundwater issues*
 - *Majority will experience joy of discovery at exhibit*
 - *Behavioral*
 - *Return to Barton Springs more often*
 - *Become groundwater stewards*
- *Audiences*
- *Content themes*
- *Design vocabulary*

6. Next Steps

MEETING NOTES

Barton Springs Bathhouse Interpretive Experience

Key Stakeholders Meeting

November 14, 2019

Attendees: Jodi Jay, COA PARD Aquatics
Kevin Thuesen, COA WPD
Jessica Wilson, COA WPD
Nathan Bendik, COA WPD
Jessica Gordon, COA WPD
Lucas Massie, COA PARD
Cynthia Jeffries, COA PARD
Bobby Levinski, SOS Alliance
Pat Brodnax, SOS Alliance
Kathy Maddox, COA PARD ANSC
Clark Hancock, Save Barton Creek Association
Steve Barnick, Friends of Barton Springs Pool
Amanda Ross, COA PARD Natural Resources
Michael Adair, COA PARD
Jessica Gilzow, COA PARD ANSC
Mike Cannatti, Barton Springs Conservancy
Judith Sims, BSC
Karen Kocher, BSC
Patricia Bobeck, citizen and swimmer
Justin Schneider, COA PARD
Sergio Altamirano, COA PWD
John McKennis, COA PARD
Curtis Roberts, fd2s
Natalie Davis, fd2s
Al Godfrey, LGA
Laurie Limbacher, LGA

The purpose of the meeting was to share draft interpretive planning goals, objectives, audiences, content themes and design vocabulary elements for feedback, in preparation for a community engagement meeting scheduled for December 5, 2019. A digital presentation related to discussion topics was viewed during the meeting.

A Conversation with Key Stakeholders, Barton Springs Bathhouse Interpretive Experience:

The presentation began with an introduction of the interpretive experience project and meeting goals. The exhibit/interpretive experience consultant provided introductory information about the work of their firm. Background information on the Bathhouse Rehabilitation design work was provided, as context for the space program and schedule coordination between the two projects.

The group then reviewed content slides listing topics drafted by PARD outlining goals, objectives, audiences, content themes and design vocabulary elements, for group discussion.

Goals: Proposed goals as currently drafted by PARD were discussed. The group offered comments on the Goals, including:

- Stewardship of the springs should be a goal. The springs have many values to many people, including spiritual, historic, and the goals should include not just the scientific goals but the broader range of goals.

- The original design of Splash! focused on the Edward Aquifer, exclusively. There are new visitor patterns now, and the stewardship of the springs is an important issue to address in the new exhibit. The users of the springs are not casual users anymore.
- The outreach programs need to go beyond the walls of the building,
- PARD noted that the goals include the salamander, the pool and the aquifer.
- The goals as stated are not specific enough. The word “program” is a general term.
- The rehabilitated space lends itself to picking up a broader audience than in the previous configuration.
- Need more room for messages, to inform the users of the pool and the larger interpretive experience issues.
- Emphasize the recharge zone of the springs.

Objectives: Proposed *Learning, Emotional and Behavioral Objectives* as currently drafted by PARD were discussed. The group offered comments on a range of topics, including:

Learning:

- Expand focus beyond groundwater. Focus on users of the pool itself. This should be a separate bullet. The springs user is the primary audience now. User behavior for the springs.
- This is a good place to include more information about eating at the pool, to help people understand the consequences of that, why it is prohibited and encourage better participation in the requirement. Also sunscreen, showers, running shoes as related to the pool environment.
- Agreement with the previous bullet point – users of the pool take on the aesthetic experience while at the pool.
- Appreciate comments on stewardship, but don't want to lose emphasis on groundwater.
- Stewardship is linked with water quality. Actions at the surface influence groundwater.
- Bring lifeguards into the conversation.
- Might report on progress to date – 29% of the recharge zone has been purchased.
- Emphasize the immediate experience of visiting the pool. Make connections to other programs of stewardship.
- Experience when walking through the space will be different, with a greater connection to the swimmers.
- The issue is more than sunscreen use and food as threats to the pool. Can also make connections to threats to the watershed – vote for bonds, care when changing oil in your car, etc. Address the issue at both the macro and the micro scale.
- Provoke people to look at the larger picture
- Celebrate Austin and the successes to date with protection of the recharge zone
- Also note how far we still have to go with the protection efforts
- Opportunity to address both personal and community responsibilities, with respect to the pool and the watershed.
- It might be helpful to have a concierge-type of person on staff, to provide more information and guide people through the exhibit.
- Be mindful of staff resources required for static versus dynamic/interactive exhibits.
- Discussion of funding sources that might help with these concerns. Also, the sum referenced in the goals is from the Habitat Conservation Plan under the endangered species permit, and the ultimate goal is to do more than that minimum.
- Include an index of dollars spent related to stewardship issues.

- Regarding having a concierge in the exhibit, that seems to be moving away from the fact that this is a bathhouse. Don't agree with a concierge on staff, but maybe volunteers would be a way to do this. The group discussed public funding for a professional volunteer coordinator, and a concern was expressed about spending taxpayer funds for those costs.

Emotional:

- Suggestion to reword the first bullet on the slide to say that the majority of visitors will move along a/the stewardship journey. Also, for the third bullet, reword to say that visitors will experience the joy of the springs.
- Suggestion to include a reference to the salamander in the second bullet.
- Experience the natural environment with other animals, in addition to the salamander
- See humans as part of larger natural systems
- See where the water comes out of the springs, even on a film element in the exhibit.
- The salamanders are shy creatures, and a film element can show them maybe more effectively than a live exhibit can.

Behavioral:

- Minimize the types of behaviors that degrade the springs. Make visitors immediate stewards of the springs.
- Connect with greater elements of things outside the springs.
- Provide information to connect with other programs, groups or people that visitors might want to follow up with. Give the visitors tools to do this.
- Provide information, inspire action, programming
- More on stewardship – related groups have many activities. Expose people to those outlets, including FBSP, SBCA, SOS, BSC
- People share excitement about the space. Make an “Instagram-able” space. Visitors become ambassadors for the springs.
- Include a history component. Do the Barton Springs things, become part of a cultural continuum of Austin
- Understanding the cultural context and history of the Springs in Austin. But, was noted that in previous community outreach sessions for the South Grounds project, preference was expressed for not having a large sign in the landscape.
- Include a stewardship component, to describe a larger conservation effort with public and private money. Encourage private philanthropy.

Audiences: Proposed audiences as currently drafted by PARD were discussed. The group offered comments on the audiences, including:

- If the listing is in terms of priorities, pool users should be the primary audience. (It was noted that the listing is not ordered or prioritized.)
- There are several severely handicapped people who use the pool, and aged and aging people also use the pool. The exhibits should be accessible to them. (It was noted that the exhibits are envisioned for all ages and all abilities.)
- Regular swimmers at the pool are older and getting older.
- Related to the first comment, don't agree that swimmers are the exclusive or most important users of the exhibit/interpretive materials.

- The group discussed co-mingling of swimmers coming in and school groups in the exhibit space. (It was noted that ticket taking will be done differently, and the groups can be appropriately managed.)
- Related to the school group use, it was noted that three separate classes visited Splash! the day before, along with several adult users.
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Content Themes: Proposed content themes as currently drafted by PARD were discussed. The group offered comments on the content themes, including:

- The list is as set of nice facts or information, but is not really one of interpretive themes. It doesn't answer the "what for" question, or why is this important.
- Include the culture of the pool. Different spiritual groups use the pool.
- The Goals included the salamander, but it is not included here. Seems like it should be.
- Safety of the lifeguards, creek
- Habitat and ecosystem of the springs
- Quantity and quality of groundwater can be impacted by human behavior. Also applies to the use of the springs.

Design Vocabulary: The group discussed the three levels initially described for the exhibits, which are defined by the level of interactivity. Level 1 is primarily static, Level 2 includes both static and interactive exhibit materials and Level 3 is primarily interactive exhibit materials, with electronic or digital components. PARD has proposed striving for something at Level 2.5, with an many interactive elements and some static elements. The group offered thoughts on the levels for the design vocabulary, including:

- What age group is being targeted for the exhibit? The current exhibit is designed for children. Also, how long is the intended visitor's experience at the site?
- Designs for children are typically used by adults with ease.
- The goal to be a Level 2.5 is good, but technology moves, so might be lower than that by the time the exhibit opens and might drop further still over time.
- Can have elements of all of the levels – 1, 2 and 3.
- Consider the possibility of water damage to the exhibit materials. Not from flood events, per se, but from rain damage or roof failure.
- Encourage making this a living exhibit, which will require an ongoing budget for updates and changes in the future.
- Museum spaces designed for children also draws adults, as well. Screens don't attract everyone, though, so include some simple, tactile things.
- Lay out the technology/infrastructure needs for the space. A big limitation in the current exhibit was a way to change the infrastructure over time. Also, providing access to water and spring water for the exhibits. The exhibit needs to be changeable over time.
- Slightly concerned with going too technical. Need to be able to pay in the future to keep the exhibit going.
- Need to study crowd flows through the entry and exhibit space.
- Need to be mindful of fire marshal requirements for occupying the space. (It was noted that event scheduling would be mindful of peak swim user visit times, to be coordinated with school groups and other event use times.)

The group offered thoughts on the design vocabulary form factors and ideas, including:

- Will there be a live salamander exhibit? It can be very powerful to have a live specimen. (It was noted that this question is still being evaluated, for technical issues.)
- In the early designs for the original exhibit, a large suspended salamander mobile was proposed, which was not favored.
- Real time pool information on flows, temperature, turbidity, water conditions, etc. should be included. Also real time information on the creek and aquifer should be included.
- Water quality should be included.
- Manipulatives and videos can be combined.

The group offered thoughts on the most impactful element of the current Splash! exhibit, including:

- With the existing immersive exhibit, the same story is told in four different ways.
- Related to the previous discussions about a live salamander exhibit, a general comment that some are not comfortable with having a live salamander on exhibit. It is like a zoo, and not a natural habitat for the salamander(s) on display.
- Regarding a water feature, what would that be? It would take away from the springs, which does not seem like a good thing to do.
- What is the intended experience? It should not be a children's museum.
- A favorite water feature is the one that shows the water from various creeks, to compare and contrast conditions in them.
- Agreement that live salamanders on display is weird. Feature "champions" in photos or on film, instead.

The group participated in an image sorting exercise, with exhibits shown on the attached photo page resonating with the participants in the image sorting exercise.

Next Steps: An image with text taken from the COA website, describing the upcoming Community Engagement meeting for the project was reviewed, as was a preliminary schedule for the interpretive experience project. (It was noted that the schedule was out of date, and that all meetings are shifted forward by two months or so, related to the actual Notice to Proceed given for the project.)

The group discussed the upcoming Community Engagement, which is set for the evening of December 5, 2019. The group offered comments, as follows:

- Ask about what Splash! means to you
- Just focus on the exhibit, and not the context information on the building and the rehabilitation project
- Keep it simple – don't need the plans. Just two boards – one of images of the existing exhibit and one of different possible new elements. Concentrate on emotional responses.

Key Stakeholders Image Sorting Results

These images garnered consideration during our meeting with Key Stakeholders.



