COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING

JULY 8, 2021
5:30 – 7:30 PM
ANDREW P. SANCHEZ & COPELIN-BYRD MULTI-SERVICE CENTER
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OVERVIEW

Sankofa Community Development Corporation (Sankofa) hosted a community meeting to envision the development of Wetland Park and Nature Trail in the Lower Ninth Ward. First, participants learned about the history of the Wetland Park and current plans to activate the full 40-acre area adjacent to the Bayou Bienvenue Triangle. Participants were then engaged in interactive activities to explore programming that would support full use of the site. The engagement process led to a shared understanding of preferred community options for relaxation, environmental education, economic development, and recreation for all to enjoy.

The aim of this engagement is to facilitate the co-creation of a vision that brings together the best ideas and resources for the Wetland Park that will connect residents and small businesses to outdoor recreation, STEM education, and green infrastructure job training. Based on stakeholder input, Sankofa will finalize an implementation plan that will aide in site planning, program prioritization, and will serve as a base line for fundraising efforts to underwrite the completion of the Wetland Park.

Meeting Summary

The community meeting was held on Thursday, July 8, 2021, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. In total, nearly 50 community stakeholders were in attendance.

After a brief round of introductions, Rashida Ferdinand, Executive Director of Sankofa presented an overview of the organization inclusive of its history, mission, vision, and health-centered community and economic development program areas.

About Sankofa CDC

Building healthier communities for generations to come

- A 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded in 2008 by Lower Ninth Ward residents committed to revitalization of the area
- Works with residents and other community stakeholders to identify locally-felt social challenges to address them in thoughtful, culturally-competent ways
- Addresses the social determinants of health to create a local environment that promotes positive health outcomes and builds healthier communities for generations to come
The following development timeline of the Wetland Park was presented. It was noted in 2008, the first seed was planted to create the Wetland Park by Lower Ninth Ward residents.

Development Timeline

2008
- **THE VISION**: Initiated by Steve Ringo to develop Bayou Bienvenue and Florida Avenue Corridor with Lower Ninth Ward residents

2015
- **THE ASK**: Request to develop pilot project on 2-acre site of Florida Ave between Dubreuil to Delery Streets

2017
- **THE AWARD**: S&WB Green Infrastructure programs awards planning and implementation grant to Sankofa CDC to execute 2-acre pilot project from Dubreuil to Delery Streets. Sankofa CDC receives City of New Orleans Concessions Agreement for project construction

2019
- **THE PARTNERS**: Engaged with the Lower Ninth Ward community members Drs John Day & Gary Shaffer, and National Park Service-RTCP to develop master plan for expansion to 40-acre wetland park master plan.

2020
- **THE PLAN**: Developed 6 additional acres with community programming. Partnered with the City DPW- Environmental Affairs office and Deep South Center for Environmental Justice to remove illegally dumped waste from site. Worked with Lower Ninth Ward community members and City Depts of Sanitation and Code Enforcement to remove 2,200 invasive trees and over 45 tons of debris from Florida Ave

2021
- **THE CEA**: City of New Orleans executes 20-year Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with Sankofa CDC to develop and maintain the 40-acre Wetland Park project.
THE OPPORTUNITIES

The following opportunities are identified as the highest impact and best uses for the Wetland Park:

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: Green Jobs & Green Infrastructure
Promoting a workforce development pipeline of green infrastructure jobs supported by skills training and job retention programming.

This opportunity is inclusive of groundskeeping, horticulture, gardening, marsh restoration, plant and lawn specialization and more. These jobs, related skills and infrastructure development are growing in demand as the City launches new green infrastructure initiatives.

ECONOMIC IMPACT: Filling the Gap
Levering investments in green infrastructure to circulate funds in the local economy to bolster housing development, small business development and ecotourism.

This opportunity will increase the number of housing units, commercial storefronts, and visitors with spending power in the neighborhood.

RESILIENCY PLANNING: Comprehensive Recovery Opportunities
Developing green infrastructure that links resilience to community development.

This opportunity will reduce the risk of flooding and increases the community’s ability to recover.

“Fishing saved us...just being out there with the older men made a difference in our lives.”
- Errol Joseph, Resident
Economic data highlighted below is referenced from the 2021 Sankofa CDC Workforce Development Plan: Economic Impacts and Co-Benefits prepared by Earth Economics.

### The Opportunity
**Green Jobs Training**

Green Infrastructure job training with placement of 200 trainees into green infrastructure jobs from 2022-2025

### Economic Impact
**Recreation Spending from Visitors to Wetland Park**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Visitors per year</th>
<th>Spending (Low)</th>
<th>Spending (High)</th>
<th>Annual Visitor Spending (Low)</th>
<th>Annual Visitor Spending (High)</th>
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<tr>
<td>2029</td>
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<td>$21</td>
<td>$154</td>
<td>$655,200</td>
<td>$4,804,800</td>
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</table>
PROGRAMMING & DESIGN

CURRENT STATUS
Wetland Park Director, Tricia LeBlanc provided an overview of the current and planned highlights of the Wetland Park. She noted 400 invasive Chinese Tallow trees were removed and replaced with over 300 Bald Cypress and 200 herbaceous trees. This has allowed over 81,000 gallons of water to flow into the area and support a habitat for many types of plants, butterflies, birds and other wildlife.

FUTURE EXPANSION
The development of the 40 acres of land presents the opportunity for students, local residents, and visitors to enjoy walking, jogging, canoeing, and other physical activities in a nature setting.
“I am excited about the Sankofa Wetland Park’s development and the potential of this infrastructure and economic development project, and I support it 1000 percent.”

- Louisiana Senator Joe Bouie, District 3
ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

INTRODUCTION
After the presentation, meeting participants were engaged in an activity to brainstorm opportunities to advance the strategic vision for the Wetland Park. Each table was equipped with activity sheets outlining the highest impact and best uses of the site. Participants were asked to discuss and prioritize their preferences for the Wetland Park. After the breakout discussions, the entire group came back together to share key takeaways from their conversations and to discuss next steps.

TABLE ACTIVITY
The following activity sheets were developed to outline each project opportunity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMUNITY USEAGE OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>YOUTH EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>ECONOMIC IMPACT OPPORTUNITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o Kayak &amp; Canoeing</td>
<td>o School Field Trips</td>
<td>o Green Job Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Fishing</td>
<td>o Nature Play Activities</td>
<td>o Green Jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Picnic &amp; Rest Areas</td>
<td>o Fishing</td>
<td>o Eco-Tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Exercise Programs</td>
<td>o Nature Walks</td>
<td>o Investment Funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Bike Trails</td>
<td>o Exercise Programs</td>
<td>o Corridor Improvements</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Walking Trails</td>
<td>o Boy &amp; Girl Scouts Activities</td>
<td>o Neighborhood Improvements</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Nature &amp; Meditation Walks</td>
<td></td>
<td>o Water Retention Improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Special Event Space</td>
<td></td>
<td>o Small Business Partnerships</td>
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</table>

COMMUNITY INPUT

Opportunities for Community Usage at the Wetland Park
Overwhelming when asked to identify what opportunities could support a culture of inclusivity and connection, participants prioritized uses of the Park that promoted walking trails, fishing and gathering in the form of picnicking. Next, participants envisioned special event spaces, rest areas and the opportunity to kayak, bike and canoe. Lastly, health and exercise programming were also noted.
Opportunities for Youth Education at the Wetland Park

Overwhelming when asked to identify what opportunities could support children and youth education, participants prioritized uses of the Park that facilitate scouting activities and school field trips for grades K-12. Next, participants envisioned educational programming that promotes nature play and fishing. Lastly, walking trails, nature walks, environmental education, STEM learning, job training, and camping were also noted.
Opportunities for Economic Development Impact at the Wetland Park

Overwhelming when asked to identify what opportunities could promote economic development at the Park, participants prioritized water retention uses and corridor improvements. Next, participants ranked green jobs, green job training, fund development and small business partnerships. Lastly, eco-tourism, trailways and area beautification was also validated.
“For decades, this section of Florida Ave was an eyesore in the Lower Ninth Ward. It was [an] area of blight and illegal dumping. Through Sankofa’s leadership, the area is being developed into [a] wetland park and nature trail. As a resident of the Lower Ninth Ward, I am thankful for the work Sankofa has completed in the transformation of [an] area of neglect into an area of beauty. I am excited about the future of the Wetland Park and the positive impact it will have on our community.”

– Dawn Davis Lower Ninth Ward resident
SUMMARY & TIMELINE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this work thus far to brainstorm about project values and vision and programming. This engagement builds upon feedback collected from the previous meetings and culminate in the validation of final plans to activate the full 40-acre area adjacent to the Bayou Bienvenue Triangle. This final summary document will be shared and distributed directly to everyone who has participated in the process.

Below is a timeline of our projected engagement process:

- **September 2021**: Community & Youth Education Program Begins
- **November 2021**: Groundbreaking for Completion of Remaining 32 Acres of Bioretention Ponds
- **December 2022**: Development of Wetland Park Completed