

City of Cocoa
Sustainability Advisory Board
Minutes for Working Group
January 14, 2021
City Hall Conference Room, 3rd Floor
6:00-8:00 pm

Attendance:
Linda Gombert
Christina Jackson
Jennifer Riggs
Jo Shim

Amendments made at the March 4, 2021 Meeting

Overview:

The working group met to further discuss permanently open the Clearlake Trail Loop during daylight hours, starting in February 2021 as an event in the Mayor's Fitness Challenge. The group also reviewed recommendations from the Resiliency Action Plan and identified priorities for Cocoa.

Clearlake Loop

The trail loop around Clearlake is an incredible recreational and natural asset, long beloved by Cocoa residents. Currently, locked gates prevent access, and a mindset of scarcity prevents making the most of something we already have to take care of. By opening the trail during daylight hours and with very little resource from Cocoa, the trail could become an attractive feature for the City. Left closed, this area seems to be a secluded liability, attracting people and activities that do not want to be discovered.

The Sustainability Board would like to host walks around Clearlake Loop during the Mayor's Fitness Challenge, both to help increase participation in the Challenge, and to double up on PR/communications opportunities to get the word out to neighbors that the loop is open again. After the Challenge the trail would remain open every day during daylight hours.

To prepare, there is minimal clean up or maintenance required because the trail is paved and in good condition. The goal for ongoing operating conditions of the trail is healthy, natural greenspace, not a manicured park. This minimizes future maintenance. There is one dead pine tree that is oriented over the trail; it probably should be removed. There are pepper trees that could be cleaned out but there is no immediate requirement to do so; KBB has expressed interest in establishing a trails maintenance volunteer program during the winter and pepper tree removal would be a good clean-up goal. There may be a new maintenance burden for Cocoa PW after large storms and hurricanes; Linda Gombert volunteered to make an assessment of clean up and maintenance hours.

Unanswered issues center around insurance, liability, and security management seem to be the primary obstacle to opening the trails. There are four gates:

1. The auto gate at the Natural History Museum

2. A pedestrian gate southwest of Travis Park
3. A pedestrian gate southwest of the history museum and looking onto the entrance of the planetarium. (This is where the dead pine tree is.)
4. A pedestrian gate farther west of the history museum. This does not need to be open to walk around Clearlake. (We are assuming this is likely to be closed in the near future.)

The Sustainability Board would like to see the pedestrian gates 2 and 3 always open, and four signs posted that trail hours are dawn to dusk, daylight only, like in other city parks. This would alleviate the burden of managing opening and closing the trail gates on a daily basis. The City needs to confirm this arrangement and coordinate with three organizations; these are the associated points of contact:

County/Tiger Den (POC Dan Cook and his supervisor)

Eastern Florida State College (Sargent Davis)

City of Cocoa, (Lorraine Koss D4 Council, and Bryant Smith D/PW)

The Sustainability Board needs the City to confirm the gates can be kept open, and establish open hours and processes. Additionally, the Board asks the City to design and produce four signs in keeping with its park branding so that each side of the two gates shows hours of operations. Another possibility is installing a pedestrian counter and keeping track of trail use on a weekly basis.

The Sustainability Board would also like the City to work with EFSC security/maintenance to partner with Cocoa by driving the paved loop once a day (golf cart) and text any findings to Cocoa/PW and/or Cocoa/PD for their response. The park will be safer with more neighbors, students, and employees regularly walking the Clearlake Loop. EFSC students and employees would benefit by having easy access to a pleasant walk.

In time, it would likely make sense to seek funding to make educational signs that explain the natural features in the park. UF/IFAS has already agreed to identify species and ecosystems as necessary. A map kiosk and an updated map would also be things for the future; printed maps are obsolete as people now take pictures of a map posted at the kiosk. The Enchanted Forest is a good model for signs and outdoor educational materials.

Jo will reach out the Mayor Blake to coordinate on the Mayor's Fitness Challenge and incorporating the loop into covid-friendly walks for Cocoans.

Priorities from Resilient Cocoa

Having worked closely on the Resiliency project in 2019, attending all the working groups, and having pursued many of the same topics through the Sustainability Plan research and work, the Sustainability Advisory Board feels it important to help the City of Cocoa prioritize some recommended Resiliency actions. The priorities cluster around five topics:

1. Pursue Funding Mechanisms for Resiliency Projects

LS-2, 1: Identify possible funding mechanisms to finance resiliency projects

ES-4, 1: Apply for funding opportunities that help finance resiliency projects such as onsite stormwater management, living shorelines (acquiring land that serves as greenspace buffers)

2. Living Shorelines and Green Infrastructure

LS-3: Determine where living shorelines are appropriate and prioritize implementation.

Strangely, there is nothing about canopy inventory, management and expansion.

3. Greenspace and Mitigation

LS-2, 4: Work with stakeholders to assess process for acquiring properties for greenspace and mitigation purposes.

IE-3, 4: Assess properties for potential acquisition for greenspace, public space, and flood mitigation.

4. Update Codes

LS-3, 1 and 6: Update City's Land Development Code to require onsite storm water management and adopt best practices to mitigate heat island effect.

IE-5, 4: Update land development code to require all new development to design for a net zero discharge of natural runoff

ID5-1: Audit Comp Plan against other plans to ensure compatibility of addressing resiliency and future development based on future conditions

IE-5, 5: Adopt urban design guidelines that could protect and buffer structures from the impacts of vulnerabilities such as sea level rise, storm surge, flooding, wind damage, and the urban heat island effect.

IE-6, 1: Update Comp Plan and code to ensure all affordable and low income housing is located outside the 100-year flood zone and (Coastal Community Services Area -???)

5. Communication and Education

LS-4, 2: Educate elected officials about the City's primary vulnerabilities and hazard mitigation strategies.

ES-1, 2: Work with the community to identify local business such as gas stations, food suppliers or other that provide specific services or resources vital for recovery (water, sandbag distribution)

ES-4, 6: Create an outreach plan to involve all communities in the City to engage in local decisions.

IE-1, 1: Create partnerships to educate property owners about the benefits of green infrastructure, living shorelines, oyster matts, etc.

HW-1, 6: Establish a community wide pre-hurricane protocol and alert for identifying and removing hazards (preparing, shelter, and evacuation).

IE-6. Jennifer Riggs will call on IE-6 the task that starts with developing incentives for developers.

NS-5. Jennifer Riggs and Kristina Jackson will look into the progress of baffle boxes on Indian River Drive.

N.B. Linda Gombert is going to call PW to find out about the status of Cocoa's fertilizer ordinance and how it relates to the county's. Jo will research what local organizations address

food insecurity after natural disasters. Jenny will call about salt water intrusion into water sources. The answers will go on the Sustainability web page.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35.