



May 4, 2022 – OSRP Steering Committee Notes:

The City of Rensselaer Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Steering Committee kick-off meeting was held on May 4, 2022, via Microsoft Teams to provide an overview of project purpose and scope of work, discuss the role of the OSRP Committee, and discuss the public engagement plan. The following people were in attendance:

- Tracy Pitcher – St. Paul's Center
- David Ellis – Rensselaer Environmental Coalition, Zoning Board
- Nick Payton – KIPP Charter Schools
- Linda von der Heide – Rensselaer County
- Christine Vanderlan – Hudson River Estuary Program, DEC
- Ketura Vics – City of Rensselaer
- Christina Minkler – JMT
- Angie Hernandez, AICP – JMT
- Cameron Carley – JMT

The following items were discussed during the meeting, and items that require JMT follow-up are in **bold blue text**, items that require City of Rensselaer follow-up are in **bold gold text**:

Overview of Project Purpose and Scope of Work:

- Ketura presented the purpose of the OSRP to the group. The purpose of the plan is to build on the work of the natural resources inventory (NRI) to focus on conservation of undeveloped areas, with some focus on developed parks.

Role of OSRP Committee:

- **Inform and Guide the Plan**
 - Angie explained that the OSRP Committee's role is to help ensure that the project is considerate of the community views and expectations.
- **“Boots on the Ground”**
 - Angie explained another aspect of the OSRP Committee's role, which is to be “boots on the ground” and to bring community members into the planning process. In addition to the project team's efforts to publicize OSRP events, the team will rely on OSRP Committee members to spread the word in their communities to get the community engaged in the planning process.

Public Engagement Plan:

- **Review Draft Public Engagement Plan**
 - Angie explained that the public engagement plan for this project is still in draft form. The public engagement plan will be implemented in four separate input periods instead of a “one-and-done” approach.
 - Angie gave an overview of each of the four public input period as follows:
 - Public Input Period #1 - Public Visioning and Opinion Surveying
 - Public Input Period #2 - Review of Existing Conditions, Recommendations for Priority Areas, and Tools / Techniques for Conservation



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- Public Input #3 - Review of the 1st Draft Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Public Input #4 - Review of the 2nd Draft Open Space and Recreation Plan.
- Ketura explained that the plan is to front-load public engagement over this spring, summer, and fall. After that period, there will be a lot of time for JMT to draft the plan, during which the OSRP Committee will probably not hear much from JMT.
- Ketura mentioned that one of the team's talking points during public engagement is likely to be the \$2 million in the pipeline (if approved) that will be going to parks and open spaces in Rensselaer and that hopefully this will bring excitement to the community.
- **JMT will finalize the draft public engagement plan, circulate to Ketura for review, then forward to the OSRP Committee for feedback.**
- **Discuss Draft Public Outreach Survey**
 - Ketura explained that the purpose of public engagement for this project is to educate members of the public and receive informed feedback on green infrastructure/climate change solutions that can be implemented in Rensselaer's parks and open spaces. Ketura wants to get a sense of how much the public understands the environment and how much they support conservation efforts.
 - Angie mentioned that there will need to be visuals of potential green infrastructure/climate change solutions created for the public outreach survey and other public engagement efforts to implement the "informed feedback" aspect of public engagement.
 - **JMT will finalize the draft public outreach survey, circulate to Ketura for review, then forward to the OSRP Committee for feedback.**
- **Pop-Up Event Locations and Ideas**
 - Potential locations and ideas for pop-up events were provided by OSRP Committee members: beautifying entrances to the city by planting trees or flowers, pop-up event in an existing greenspace (or one that might be less known, such as the Hollow), using temporary paint on a parking lot to show the potential for a greenspace onsite, temporary closing a street for an "open streets" style event with vendors, painting murals under the overpasses, engaging patrons or planting pollinator gardens at Wednesday concerts, scavenger hunts through multiple parks, events at St. Paul's Center, events at playground Fridays through KIPP Charter Schools.
 - **JMT will work with Ketura to firm up the pop-event locations and format to best fit the purpose and needed outcomes for the engagement.**

Miscellaneous:

- **Engaging with Young People and Schools**
 - Nick, Linda, and Ketura expressed a desire to engage schools and school-age children with this project. Ketura mentioned that the schools in Rensselaer are already on board with helping in planning efforts, since these ideas have come up before for another recent plan.
 - Nick proposed ideas for children-oriented events to bring in families where the kids could have a fun activity and the adults could participate in public



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engagement. He also supports a social media-heavy approach to public engagement.

- Other ideas for involvement with schools include a logo design competition for school art classes, becoming a recipient of public service hours from schools, having students record events and post to social media, piggybacking off existing mural painting activity under the overpasses, giving a tour of Doane Stuart's green roof, etc.
- **Advertising Events and Encouraging Attendance**
 - Ketura mentioned that Rensselaer's social media presence will be a challenge for the project. Rensselaer Planning has its own social media that Ketura runs but the accounts do not have many followers. It will be possible to post advertisements and event notifications there, but sharing those posts broadly will be a challenge.
 - Nick suggested creating a Hootsuite account for Rensselaer Planning to schedule posts.
 - Dave suggested making social media pages for the OSRP to use to publicize events. Nick suggested handing out branded items ("swag") or other incentives at events to encourage people to take the survey and participate in the outreach activities.
 - Tracy mentioned that she has connections with civic organizations in Rensselaer. **Ketura to follow up with Tracy to of other community organizations in the City to engage with.**
 - Ketura mentioned that there is some budgetary latitude for advertising materials such as fliers and will coordinate with JMT on the promotional materials that will be produced.

Next Steps / Action Items:

- Ketura encouraged the OSRP Committee members to send her additional ideas they may have in terms of engagement and outreach.
- Nick offered to help with events and materials/logistics.
- **JMT will finalize the draft public engagement plan, circulate to Ketura for review, then forward to the OSRP Committee for feedback.**
- **JMT will finalize the draft public outreach survey, circulate to Ketura for review, then forward to the OSRP Committee for feedback.**
- **Ketura to follow up with Tracy to of other community organizations in the City to engage with.**
- **Ketura will schedule the next meeting to touch base before the first public engagement to discuss logistics. The meeting could be near the end of June or maybe sooner.**
- To better accommodate OSRP Committee members' schedules, this meeting will be scheduled later in the day going forward.