**City of Albuquerque
Open Space Division**

RIO GRANDE TREE NURSERY PUBLIC MEETING

**Project:** Rio Grande Tree Nursery

**Property Description/Address:** 3301 Rio Grande Blvd NW

**Date Submitted:** May 17, 2022

**Submitted By:** Open Space Division and MRWM Landscape Architects

**Meeting Date/Time:** Wednesday, May 4, 2022, 5:30-6:30 pm

**Meeting Location:** Zoom

**Parties: MRWM Landscape Architects, design consultant: led meeting and recorded notes**

**Applicant:** City of Albuquerque Open Space Division of the Parks and Recreation Department

**Neighborhood Associations/Interested Parties:** Alvarado Gardens Neighborhood Association, Trail Watch Volunteer, Friends of Candelaria Nature Preserve, Rio Grande Return, Rio Grande Nature Center State Park, Open Space Volunteer, OSAB, Open Space Alliance, Thomas Village

**Background Meeting/Summary:**

This meeting was held to review the site design for the Rio Grande Tree Nursery Open Space to be heard by the EPC following application to be submitted on June 8, 2022. A presentation by the Open Space Superintendent and landscape architectural design consultants reviewed the history and current status of the Rio Grande Tree Nursery and its relationship to the Candelaria Nature Preserve and the impetus for the current application. The public process with the adjacent neighbors leading to this meeting was also discussed and initial concerns shared.

**Outcome:**

The neighborhood residents expressed appreciation towards the City and design consultants for listening to their concerns throughout the design process and working with them to come up with a plan that worked for all of the nearest residents while still offering a beautiful and valuable public resource to the larger community.

**Meeting Specifics:**

1. **Introductions**
	1. Colleen Langan-McRoberts – Open Space Superintendent
	2. Greg Miller – Principal Landscape Architect at MRWM Landscape Architects
	3. Kristina Werenko – Associate Landscape Architect at MRWM Landscape Architects
2. **Location & Context**
	1. Rio Grande Tree Nursery is owned by the City of Albuquerque and operated by the Parks and Recreation Open Space Division. It is approximately 6.5 acres.
	2. The Duranes Lateral, a popular place for neighborhood residents to walk, runs along the west border of the property. The Campbell Ditch traces the north boundary of the parcel.
	3. The property has served as a nursery for the Parks and Rec Dept where new tree species were planted to see how they would do in parks. The other half was formerly used as a storage lot for green waste and shredded wood chips for playgrounds. The tree field remains, but there will no longer be dumping or material storage on the property.
	4. The property is located adjacent to the City of Albuquerque’s Candelaria Nature Preserve (CNP). The CNP Resource Management Plan identified the Rio Grande Tree Nursery as a preferred location for public access to the preserve, including an accessible route to newly designed wildlife viewing platforms and a parking lot of approximately 30 spaces.
3. **Proposed Program & Site Uses**
	1. **Public Uses**
		1. Accessible connection to a pedestrian bridge over the Duranes Lateral to wildlife viewing areas and the Candelaria Nature Preserve North Tract.
		2. Open-Air Education center for hands-on demonstrations and workshops to support research, restoration and operations of the Rio Grande Tree Nursery and Candelaria Nature Preserve. The flexible open space will accommodate small groups in various engagement opportunities.
		3. To accommodate small groups, the plans include group gathering areas with shade, seating, and interpretive signage. Pedestrian pathways connect gathering areas, horticultural use areas and site entries.
	2. **Horticultural & Propagation Uses**
		1. Arboretum and tree field
		2. Restoration seed planting source field
		3. NM ecozone research plantings
		4. Meadow for seed sourcing
		5. The exact horticultural uses will be determined at a later date, but some additional proposals currently under consideration include:
			1. Climate ready tree field
			2. Heritage orchard
			3. Cottonwood genotype research grove
	3. **Circulation & Operational Uses**
		1. Parking for approx. thirty automobiles including paved accessible spaces.
		2. No-idle parking for two school buses
		3. Screened and secured operations yard for equipment & materials
		4. Perimeter berms with vegetative screening
		5. Time-locked vehicle and pedestrian gates
		6. Public restroom
4. **Original Design Concepts**
	1. Leading up to today’s meeting the City and design consultants went through a community design process including three public meetings, both on site and on Zoom, with the residents whose property directly abuts the Open Space. The community was presented with five original concepts and asked to complete a survey and provide comments on the designs. There was strong consensus on locating parking and circulation towards the middle of the property.
	2. The community feedback led to two new design concepts with parking and circulation centered on the property and clear direction in terms of desiring the parcel to remain fully fenced, be locked at night, include vegetative screening for the neighbors and limit the use of large machinery on the property. The two new concepts varied mostly in the location of the storage and operations yard and public restroom as well as formal vs. in-formal public spaces.
	3. Community feedback on the two design concepts focused on the location of the storage and operations yard and the restroom. The final design concept addresses this feedback and attempts to accommodate all resident’s wishes by locating the operations yard and restroom towards the back middle of the property. The storage yard will be screened by a coyote fence at a minimum.
5. **Precedent Images (Look and Feel Images)**
	1. A Working Open Space – informal, volunteers present, flood irrigated
	2. Parking & Circulation – gravel/permeable/ treed/landscaped
	3. Shade, Fencing & Open-Air Education Center
		1. The Open-Air Education Center is not a building. At the most, a solid roof shade structure will be included as well as flexible space for different projects and workshops.
	4. Public Restroom
		1. It may be plumbed or a composting toilet. A plumbed toilet is very expensive. If that’s the route that is decided on, a temporary restroom may be necessary until funding can be obtained for the plumbed building.
		2. Exterior of restroom building may be customized and styled to fit the context
	5. Community Meadow and GSI Features
		1. Demonstration quality stormwater management that makes the site self-sufficient in terms of managing the storm water that falls on it. This is also another educational opportunity.
6. **Refined Concept Features**
	1. Entry plaza between the parking and the CNP where people can gather before heading over the lateral.
	2. Accessible path and bridge to the wildlife viewing platform at CNP.
	3. Time-locked vehicle and pedestrian gates.
	4. Public restroom tucked into corner of operations yard. It is accessible and near parking.
	5. Community meadow – light public use and seed sourcing
	6. Bus parking (2 spaces).
	7. Gravel parking lot 29 spaces plus 3 paved accessible spaces.
	8. Shade structures.
	9. Open-air education & research center.
	10. Buffer berms and ecozone research plantings.
	11. Proposed heritage orchard.
	12. Maintenance access to fields.
	13. Arboretum walking path.
	14. Proposed genotype cottonwood study field.
	15. Interpretive node.
	16. Arboretum and climate ready tree research field.
	17. Restoration seed source field
	18. Maintenance and operations yard screened by a coyote fence
	19. Interconnected looped, accessible paths that allow for a variety of exploration and walking distances.
	20. Lighting is not proposed at this time.
	21. There will be
		* NO OFF-SITE DUMPING
		* NO OFF-SITE GREEN WASTE STORAGE
		* NO OFF-SITE TRANSFER STATION OPERATIONS
		* NO STORAGE OF LARGE EQUIPMENT
		* NO IDLING BUSES
		* FREE PARKING
7. **Concept Sketch**
	1. A birds-eye-view sketch aims to show that though the plan makes it seem like there are quite a few elements incorporated into the site, it will really have a light, minimal footprint and will remain largely open, natural-feeling, and informal.
8. **Next Steps**
	1. Public comments will be collected via Candelariafeedback@cabq.gov until June 8th
	2. The City is aiming to present at the July 21, 2022 Environmental Planning Commission (EPC) meeting
9. **Questions/Comments from Meeting Participants**
	1. Will the Pedestrian Pathways be within the Tree Nursery Tract only, or will any of them extend into the rest of the Preserve?
		1. Only within the tree nursery tract.
	2. Will group gathering areas need to be reserved?
		1. The Open Space will be open to the general public during normal operation hours.
		2. Events will require registration to limit the size.
	3. Will there be a charge to park?
		1. No
	4. What will the fence along the Duranes Lateral be made of? How big is the gate that will be on the Lateral?
		1. For now, the existing fence will be repaired and reinforced.
		2. A new fence would be a non-opaque metal fence.
		3. Gate will be wide enough to accommodate mobility devices.
	5. How will access be created for ADA compliance?
		1. Accessibility is a primary design directive of this project.
		2. 3 paved accessible parking spaces
		3. Accessible paths
		4. Accessible bathroom
		5. Accessible site furnishings
		6. Accessible gate openings
	6. Will there be drinking water?
		1. Not at this time, but if a potable water source is located on the property, a drinking fountain and/or bottle-filling station will be considered.
	7. Will there be trash collection, dog poop collection?
		1. There will be trash receptacles and dog waster stations with bags located throughout the Open Space. These will be emptied/re-stocked on a regular basis by Open Space staff.
	8. Yes, the Duranes Lateral fence needs to be improved...I have seen where the chainlink fence has been pulled down/climbed over (possibly by vagrants).
	9. Also, leash policy needs to be posted if there is access from Duranes Lateral. A lot of people walk with loose dogs along the ditch.
	10. Will there be lighting?
		1. There is not any plan to have lighting at this time. If in the future, a need for lighting arises, the issue will be reconsidered.
	11. Looks like the 100’s of people who walked the ditch will get to see all the vehicles parked, the bathroom, the maintenance buildings. Seems those things should be moved to the Rio Grande side.
		1. There will be new trees and other vegetation planted along the west boundary. The parking lot is mostly obscured by trees as well. The goal of the design is to improve the view from all directions.
	12. Perhaps some trees along the west side would address Ms. Wheeler’s concern.
	13. Will the irrigation ditch along the west side still be utilized?
		1. Yes – it needs to be repaired and reinforced first. It may also serve to flood irrigation additional fields.
	14. Will there be signage at Rio Grande Blvd and at the ditch?
		1. Yes, there will be directional and wayfinding signage identifying the property, the access the CNP and the parking availability.
		2. There will also be regulatory, educational, and interpretive signs in the Open Space.
	15. What kind of events will be allowed, music, weddings, similar events?
		1. The events will be small-scale educational and volunteer-oriented events that support the mission of the CNP. The Open Space is not intended as a venue for live music, weddings, etc.
	16. Please get involved: Friends of Candelaria Nature Preserve: friendsofcandelarianaturepres@gmail.com - Jeannie Allen, President - All are welcome. Field-work every Friday, 2 hrs. 9:00-11:00 AM. Monthly Zoom meetings.
	17. How soon will the parking be available?
		1. Hard to say – first the plan needs to be approved by the EPC and funding needs to be obtained. Simple elements may be built later this year if process and funding are in place.
		2. Irrigation infrastructure will be one of the first things that needs to be done to support the other program elements
	18. Will OSA fund part of this?
		1. Partner groups, volunteers, and residents are all vital to the implementation of a project like this.
	19. I am an early riser, so the beep beep beeps don’t bother me, but I am aware of other neighbors that might want to sleep a bit more & follow neighborhood decibel maximum levels. Technically starting before 8 is not allowed?
		1. It’s possible that crews may start before 8 am collecting trash and maintaining the grounds, but except during construction of the open space, large machinery will typically not be used.
	20. Are trees being planted now?
		1. Open Space will not be planting trees until the irrigation infrastructure is in place. It’s possible that the Forestry Division of Parks and Rec will plant some, but unlikely.
	21. Will there be any staff on site?
		1. The City has two new staff positions for CNP. They will be on site frequently.
	22. Can people who want to walk the ditches park here?
		1. Yes, the Open Space will provide public access per the CNP Resource Management Plan to the preserve and by default the ditch bank trails.
		2. The hope is that this reduces parking on residential streets in the surrounding neighborhoods.
	23. Thank you for listening to our concerns and responding to them. This plan is beautiful. Good job.
	24. Thank you, Colleen, Greg, & Kristina
	25. Great well-designed plan. Thanks for taking so much feedback into consideration.
	26. Should be a great place to visit.
	27. Will be an asset to the neighborhood.
	28. Thanks, and good meeting!

MEETING ADJOURNED.

 **Names of Attendees:**

1. Colleen Langan-McRoberts, City of Albuquerque Open Space Superintendent
2. Greg Miller, MRWM Landscape Architects
3. Kristina Werenko, MRWM Landscape Architects
4. Dave Simon, City of Albuquerque Parks & Recreation Department Director
5. Cheryl Somerfeldt, City of Albuquerque Open Space Senior Planner
6. Cori Ewing, Neighbors
7. Karen Raff
8. Diana Hunt, AGNA President
9. Dave Embry, Trail Watch Volunteer
10. Tish Morris
11. Friedje Van Gils, Cherokee Rd resident
12. Dana McCabe, Cherokee Rd resident
13. Lucy Silva, Alvarado Neighborhood
14. Sharon Miles
15. Jeannie Allen, President, Friends of Candelaria Nature Preserve
16. Cameron Weber, Rio Grande Return
17. Megan Baldridge, Campbell Rd resident
18. Doug Cheney, Trail Watch Volunteer
19. Linnea Hendrickson
20. Heather MacCurdy, Rio Grande Nature Center State Park
21. Anne Karlstrom, ditch walker
22. Susan Richards, Open Space Volunteer
23. Anne Michels, Veranda Rd resident
24. Bob Hymer, Veranda St resident
25. Taylor Bui, OSAB
26. Steve Glass, Open Space Alliance
27. Cai Buck, Thomas Village resident
28. Judi Stallings
29. James Lewis
30. David Wallwork
31. Liz Carillo
32. Denise Wheeler
33. Kim Zahm
34. Carolyn Siegel
35. Jonathan Siegel