



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Economic Development Division

m e m o r a n d u m

TO: Urbana Public Arts Commission

FROM: Christina McClelland, Public Arts Coordinator

DATE: October 6, 2011

SUBJECT: Jack Mackie Phase I Preliminary Project Briefing

Background

After completing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process to identify an artist to work on the design team for the Boneyard Creek Beautification Project, Seattle artist Jack Mackie was selected by the Boneyard Creek subcommittee and City staff. This selection was approved by the Public Arts Commission at the August 9, 2011 meeting. City staff, in consultation with Foth Consultants and Wenk Associates, has reached an agreement for design services with Jack Mackie that was approved by City Council on October 4, 2011.

Discussion

As outlined in his agreement with the City, Mr. Mackie has submitted the attached Phase I Preliminary Project Briefing (Exhibit A) summarizing his initial research on the Boneyard Beautification Project and documenting his interviews held with individuals including community members, stakeholders, City Staff, and the design team during his trip to Urbana from September 14-16, 2011.

Recommendation

Staff and Mr. Mackie recommend the Commission review the attached document and come to the October 11, 2011 meeting with any questions or comments. Mr. Mackie will present slides of initial ideas for public art in the Boneyard Creek Beautification Project for the Commission's feedback.

Attachments:

Exhibit A: Phase I Preliminary Project Briefing

PHASE I PRELIMINARY PROJECT BRIEFING
SUBMITTAL ~ SEPTEMBER 20, 2011
Jack Mackie, Project Artist



“Probably every student who is a lover of the beautiful in nature... has often had occasion to remark upon the charming rivulet, which, rising in a dozen bubbling springs, murmurs across the arboretum and singing and splashing through Urbana’s parks and lawns, carries its crystal tribute to the river just beyond.”
- The Illini April 25, 1892



Aerial photograph - 2011



In undertaking development of the public art program for Segment 3 of the Boneyard Creek, my investigations and research includes extensive study of written documents, review of historic photographic record, conversations with Boneyard advocates and with business owners adjacent to the Boneyard, and walking/driving studies following the Creek through Urbana.

Readings have included current Urbana city policy documents, current and previous Boneyard Creek Master Plans, Champaign County documents, and papers by historians, ecologists, and naturalists. Newspaper records have provided a working understanding of the numerous attempts made to control, tame, eliminate, recover or enhance the Creek. These readings have also provided to me a comprehensive accounting of the various highly imaginative but ultimately inconclusive stories surrounding the naming of the Boneyard Creek.

In order for me to “localize” and begin to understand the deeper ecologies of the Creek and the geographic setting of the Creek in the greater Urbana area, I have walked the project site numerous times at varying times of day, walked Urbana’s downtown, visited the Anita Purves Nature Center, Crystal Lake Park, Meadowbrook Park, the Arboretum, and the very inspiring University of Illinois Pollinatarium. I followed the Creek (as best as possible) through Urbana by road attempting to find each street crossing of the Creek. Through Campustown I walked the Creek corridor in park-like settings, followed the Creek as it passed behind and under buildings, along buried portions of the Creek’s path, and to Scott Park and the Second Street Detention Basin in Champaign.

Running through all of my conversations with Urbana / Champaign citizens was one continuous attitude towards the Boneyard - a commitment to developing Boneyard Creek as a multi-purpose community asset. An asset that serves the serious infrastructure need of watershed management; that provides for urban recreation; that functions as an urban wildlife corridor and study opportunity; and an asset that is a source of civic pride. Without question a large portion of Urbana’s population is at best vaguely aware of the Creek. This can only be expected given the long history of its use as a drainage ditch and numerous attempts to place it out of sight and thus out of mind. Many of the residents I met have lived in Urbana for many years and have seen several attempted starts at reclamation of the Boneyard. However, upon hearing that this time the city is intent on turning dirt, they are all prideful in their part, be it large or small, of the restoration of Boneyard Creek.

These elements - the curative creation of a civic asset, resourceful watershed management, and opportunity to peel back the palimpsest that is the Boneyard - suggest guides for engaging public art in Urbana’s Boneyard Creek. These being: *Restore - Respect - Reveal.*

Restore the Creek to its fullest potential as a working streamway and a working physical and social element of Urbana’s environs;
Respect the watershed flood control infrastructure need;
Reveal the stories of the Creek - its human histories, the workings of its flora and fauna, and the complex lives of the non-human residents of the Creek and Urbana.

Project Documents Read / Reviewed

“City of Urbana Annual Public Art Program Plan for Fiscal Year 2011-2012”

“Urbana City Council and Mayoral Goals - Adopted February 1, 2010”

“2005 Urbana Comprehensive Plan”

“2002 Urbana Downtown Strategic Plan”

“2002 Comprehensive Plan Update”

“Boneyard Creek Master Plan”

Wenk Associates & HNTB May 2008

“Guidelines Report for the Boneyard Creek Master Plan”

The Boneyard Creek Commission

Conklin & Rossant: Clark, Dietz & Associates Eng. Inc.

October 1977

“A Proposal - Boneyard Creek Master Plan”

Nelson, Nelson, Wang, Bazzell, Phillips & Assoc., Inc.

1976

“History of Flood Control Projects, 1906 - 2000”

“Stormwater Project Profile”

Erosion Control Magazine - March 2002

“Rebirth of Boneyard Creek”

Environmental Almanac

December 23, 2004

“Champaign County Greenway & Trail Plan 2004”

“White Street & Springfield Avenue Corridors Analysis”

Albert Benedict & Linda Young

Center for Neighborhood Technology 2010

“You Are The Solution To Storm Water Pollution”

City of Urbana

“Boneyard Creek Bibliography”

Patricia Gobert

Illinois State Water Survey, 1998

“Urbana project planning for a better Boneyard”

Steve Bauer, *The News-Gazette*

August 22, 2010

“Environmental Awakening”

Eric Bussell, author; published on-line Halfway Interesting, A Champaign County Community Blog
May 23, 2011

“Urbana considers transforming Boneyard into amenity”

Patrick Wade, *The News-Gazette*
May 22, 2011

“Pollution Survey of Boneyard Creek”

Sanitary Water Board & Illinois State Department of Public Health
1947

“Illinois Headwaters Critical Trends Assessment”

Published by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Office of Realty and Environmental Planning with assistance from the Nature of Illinois Foundation
June 2008

“Illinois State Geologic Survey”

Prairie Research Institute
2011

“Illinois River Watch - Stream Monitoring Manual”

The National Great Rivers Research & Education Center
Lewis and Clark College 2008

Stakeholders / Interested parties & people interviewed:

Geoff Bant, Urbana artist & Arts Commissioner, Boneyard Sub-committee
Evan Blondell, Christopher Carl - Urbana Land Arts
Steven Buck - Manager, & Research Technologist, Committee on Natural Areas
Clark Bullard - Commissioner, Boneyard Creek Commission
Leslie Deem, PhD - Director, Pollenatarium
Chris Evans, Urbana artist
Anna Hochhalter, UI Landscape Architecture Graduate Student
Judy Miller - Environmental Program Director, Anita Purvis Nature Center
Dave Monk - ecologist & historian
Rick Orr - Station Theater Artistic Director
Allen Strong - Owner, Silver Creek Restaurant
Pat Sammann - Chair, Urbana Public Art Commission

Organizations contacted:

Boneyard Creek Community Day
Eric Robeson
UC Independent Media Center

TAKE ME ON BACK TO THE BONEYARD

Chorus:

Take me on back to the Boneyard
Where she flows through Urbana so close to my home,
Take my on back to the Boneyard
When I cross the Embarass, no more will I roam.

Oh there once was a prairie where soybeans grow now,
And the Boneyard went through it before any plow.
But the prairie is gone and that river is foul,
Still I want to go back to the Boneyard.

(Chorus)

I know she's not pretty as onward she flows.
I know she's a sewer, and sometimes she glows.
Perhaps we could clean her, as I've heard people tell,
Still I want to go back to the Boneyard.

(Chorus)

She's not the Missouri, the Wabash or Sioux,
She's not the Potomac, the Hudson or New,
Urbana's not Berkeley, she's sure not the Bay,
Still I want to go back to the Boneyard, today.

(Chorus)

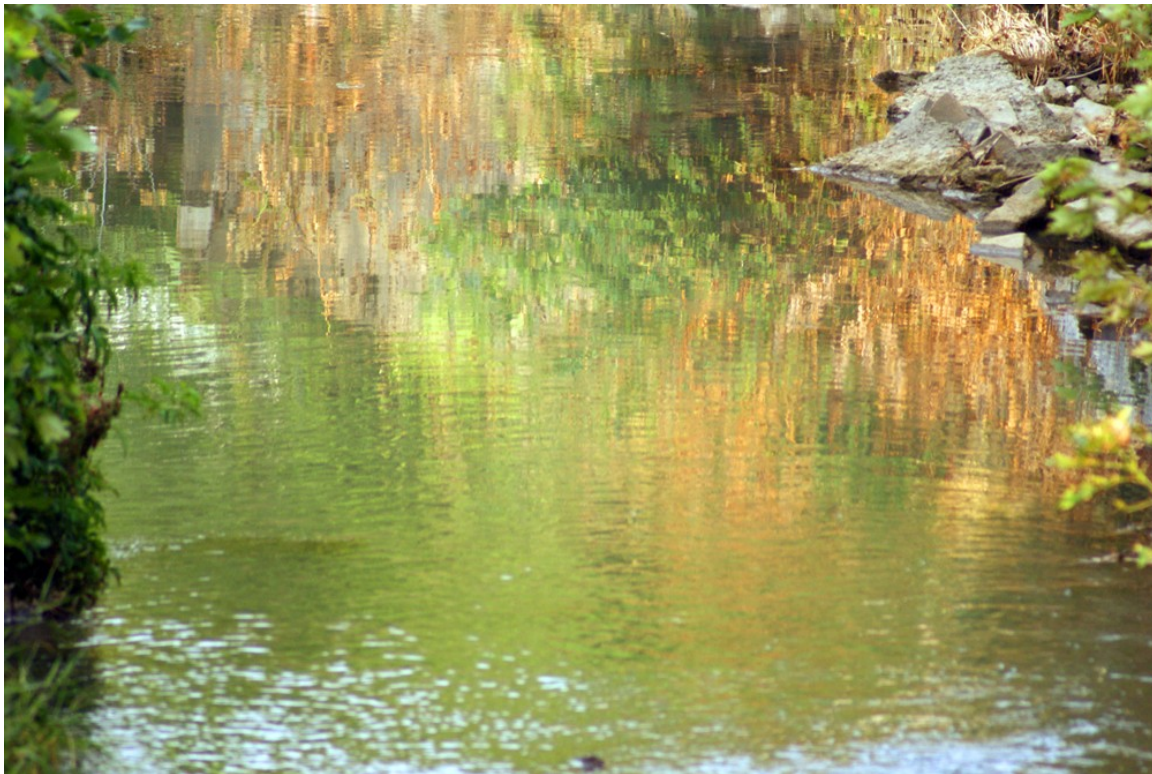
Music and Words by John Cheesman



“Down from Champaign it comes racing and tumbling, under the bending willows of the arboretum it glides, and whirling and eddying past Urbana’s stately mansions arrives at last at the river beyond...” from the Illini, April 25, 1892

*“Picture the Boneyard Creek, a clean attractive stream, being host to a fitness trail running along its banks.
As the trail winds through Campustown, it is the centerpiece of business development on both shores, a situation that repeats itself in downtown Urbana.
Sound far-fetched? Perhaps.
But... the only obstacle to a beautiful Boneyard is increased community awareness of its potential.”*

- Peter Rooney, News-Gazette December 11, 1990



Boneyard Creek at Broadway Avenue