

Location: Hercules

Issue: Hercules' Planning/Land Use

Methodology: Design Charrettes and Facilitated Meetings

CSC: 2008 Common Sense Grant Recipient

The City of Hercules has a growing population of 25,000 and is located on the San Pablo Bay part of the San Francisco Bay Estuary. It is approximately 25 miles north of San Francisco and was formed as a company town for the Hercules Powder Company, which manufactured dynamite from the late 19th century into the mid 20th century.

Much of the former Dynamite Factory property area described above contains portions of Refugio Creek, the main vehicle for the transport of water from the entire Refugio Creek Watershed from the Briones Hills down to the San Pablo Bay. During the Charette process of 2000, one of the overriding requests from the community was "to make the most of our natural resources and create places that were harmonious with the character and feel of the community." Our goal as part of the Common Sense Grant would be to once again, engage the community to identify stakeholders and ultimately to help evaluate and plan for the future of the Watershed from top to bottom.

Within the last year there has been a coalescence of random efforts among different community groups including an Elementary School, a Home Owners Association and the County's Mosquito and Vector Control District, to address various aspects of the Creek. Our goal would be to bring together these groups under the stewardship of a paid objective facilitator to identify issues relating to the Creek and develop an overarching cohesive plan that could be executed over time that would create a long term vision of how the Creek should look and function, and would ensure future development is respectful and hopefully enhances the natural features of the Creek. The facilitator we would like to engage has worked in both Watersheds adjacent to Refugio Creek (Pinole Creek Watershed and the Rodeo Creek Watershed) with great success. The outcome of the Pinole Creek initiative (known as the Pinole Creek Watershed Vision Plan) was funding from the State of \$2.6 million dollars to restore habitat while improving flood control management of the lower reaches of Pinole Creek.

The facilitator then hosted a "work in progress presentation" to ensure ideas were properly captured and developed. Comments were again recorded and then finalized as part of the "Central Hercules Plan" which was adopted in 2001 and is used today to guide growth within the City.

We anticipate a similar process for the Refugio Creek Watershed, where we would hire a facilitator and outreach coordinator that would hold a series of meetings to brainstorm, share ideas, and hopefully create a framework for a Vision Plan. Our initial network of

stakeholders would include the Friend's of Hercules, which is an environmental community group that was instrumental in passing an initiative to conserve approximately 500 acres of open space located in the hills above town. We would also reach out to property owners along the creek; Ohlone Elementary School that is adjacent to the Creek; to the Bayside Home Owners Association which owns and is responsible for the maintenance of several of the wetlands along the creek; to the local Mosquito and Vector Control District; and finally to any resident, agency or group that has an interest in participating in the process. Our meetings would be held outside City Hall such as in the public library and the goal would be to listen and document peoples' feeling about the creek and watershed in general, and how they'd like it to look and function into the future.

CSC supported this effort with a \$25,000 Common Sense Grant.