

ARCHES Meeting Notes: May 29, 2019
Mountain View Rec. Center, 5-6:30 PM

1. **Susan Jennings**, arts and culture coordinator for the City of Roanoke, opened the meeting by giving a brief background on the project:
 - It began with a survey about the Greenway and Public art conducted by a VA Tech graduate student intern. Based on this research the intern applied for several grants and the RAC was awarded a Challenge America Grant from the National endowment for the Arts to place public art under the Memorial Ave Bridge.
 - This site was chosen as it is a point where four neighborhoods converge and also because the RAC wanted to engage the immigrant residents of the nearby Terrace Apts.
 - The RAC hopes this project will become a pilot project for other neighborhoods, and as a model for other art and engagement with the Greenway.
 - Susan handed out a brief description of the project (attached), which included a list of people involved in the planning process and the goals they drafted.

2. Susan then invited the attendees to introduce themselves and state their neighborhood.

3. **Nathan Flinchum**, public services coordinator for Roanoke Public Library, gave a few historical insights about the area and the neighborhoods.
 - The Virginia Room is a repository for neighborhood history.
 - The area under the bridge was originally a part of Ghent Hill Park
 - Norwich was named after the Norwich Lock Co whose owner was from Norwich CT.
 - Raleigh Court was annexed in 1919 to provide suburban housing for city residents.
 - Memorial Ave was originally called VA Ave. and was changed to honor WW I veterans. The Vets thought it was an afterthought and boycotted the first dedication. The bridge was dedicated in 1926 and rededicated in 1991 and trees were planted as part of Ghent Hill Park. The Boy Scout who raised the flag at the first ceremony returned for the second dedication, 65 years later.
 - The original sandbox is still there and was filled with sand when that portion of the Greenway was dedicated.
 - There are photographs in the Virginia Room, as well as oral histories, maps and collections that have been donated. It's a good resource for understanding our community.

4. **Michael Clark**, director of Parks and Recreation gave an update on the Greenways
 - The Roanoke River Greenway was begun 22 years ago and is the longest of the six greenways in the City.
 - It will be the first Greenway to connect with another locality.
 - A study showed that ¼ million people use the Greenway between Wasena and RMH annually.
 - Memorial Bridge park and Ghent Hill will all be called Roanoke River Greenway in the future.
 - For FY 2020 there will be four full time employees dedicated to the greenways.

5. **Curry McWilliams** with the City's Storm Water Division reported that a trash boom will be located upstream from the Memorial Ave. Bridge. The trash boom is a flotation device used to collect debris at a certain spot, in this case the Roanoke River at the Memorial Bridge. The permit is for the upstream side of the bridge with an allowable 25-foot extension into the water. Other than the boom itself, there will be an auger anchor set up on the bank to secure the trash boom in place and allow movement during storm events. The maintenance includes removing debris from the boom every other week and removing the trash boom from the river when a storm over the 10-year event is predicted to occur. At times, this could include bringing a truck down over the berm onto the bank. A majority of the time, this project will take up minimal "beach" space.

6. **Doug Jackson**, capacity development specialist with the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development facilitated a conversation around the project. First, each participant paired up with someone they didn't know to share stories about the neighborhoods, how they came to be there, and their relationship with the greenway at the project site.

Themes from Our Stories:

1. Immigration
2. Cultural Diversity
 - looking at it helps us appreciate it in a different light
3. Family
 - new families starting in the area...new chapters
4. People leaving the area and returning to a new community
 - Much has changed in the past 5 years
5. Old trees
6. The greenway is a new magnet for our community in the region. While it used to be the mall, people now make their way here to be near the greenway, in the parks, near the river.
7. The sandbox-one participant has enjoyed playing in it

- Using water from the river to make sand castles
 - The riverbank needed to be cleaned of trash, but the sandbox was a good spot to play.
8. People take their dogs to the greenway
 9. Norwich was an industrial neighborhood with many stories of young workers in factories. The river and greenspace provided relief from work then and now.
 10. The natural beauty of our region is great.
 - It's free and accessible
 - It's kind of been rediscovered
 11. Wildlife is there. There is biodiversity
 - Baby river turtles
 - Birds
 - Fish
 12. 70 % of residents are within half a mile of a park

Then the group identified goals, building on story themes.

Suggested Project Goals

1. Connect more people who haven't connected to the parks and green spaces.
Increase exposure and access
 - a. Low income residents
 - b. Recent Immigrants
2. Make people feel a part of the process and the creation of art
3. Create a gathering space that slows greenway users and offers a space for
 - a. Gathering
 - b. Interaction
 - c. Pause
4. Create something functional, utilitarian, environmental
5. Create a spot for engagement, consider the selfie factor
6. Make it sturdy... be sure it lasts through flooding
7. Engage young people, potentially through the schools.
 - a. Houston example of concrete story tiles made by the community and visited by the community once installed
8. Bridge difficult conversations
 - a. How can we have some real conversations during the development process?
 - b. Can we include real discussion of difference?
 - c. Can ARCHES span divides?
9. Tell a story, help people find themselves in our collective story
10. Arts and parks can both be equalizers... use this as an equalizer.
11. Make it interactive, participatory
 - a. Can it be something that visitors and viewers can add to
12. Make it accessible and engaging to all abilities.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS:

- How about nighttime, can we make it a space for nighttime with creative lighting?
- Can we see about a KaBoom grant in matching to add additional interactive elements?

BETWEEN NOW AND JUNE 12:

1. Watch for email communications. We're building momentum to complete the project by December 2019.
2. Mark on you calendars:
 - a. **June 12** (Broad Community Meeting to refine project goals) and
 - b. **July 10** (Creative Placemaking Workshop) on your calendars for the next meetings.
3. Track progress at <https://arches.art.blog> (or find the page via www.artinroanoke.com)
 - a. Sign up at the bottom of the site for an alert each time we post an update.
 - b. Fill out the short [Neighborhood Creativity Survey](#)
 - c. Have others submit input at the short [ARCHES Neighborhood Input Survey](#)
4. Share the information with neighbors.
5. You don't have to live in the neighborhood to be involved. In this pilot, we're all learning together, so feel free to invite others.
6. And keep brainstorming. There are [resources for placemakers online](#).

