

Locals give thoughts on Eagle River Park design

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By: Pam Boyd



EAGLE — When members of the Eagle River Park Steering Committee gather next week to continue their design work on the new amenity, they will have plenty of public input to guide their decision making.

More than 80 people — including boaters, kayakers, neighbors and other interested individuals — participated in a recent public session hosted by the town. The executive summary for the session is still being compiled, but the general consensus from the session shows high anticipation for the new entryway to Eagle.

The river park plan envisions a new amenity both in and along the river at a current truck parking site east of the Eagle County Fairgrounds. The town has hired a company called S20 to plan various river features to attract boaters, kayakers and tubers, while the riverfront park will include passive and active recreation amenities, trails and a river beach area. The town has hired a team from Eagle County firms Zehren and Associates and Alpine Engineering to complete the park plan.

All told, the project is estimated to cost \$8.3 million. A little more than \$5.2 million of that amount will come from a bond issue supported by a 0.5 percent sales tax increase approved by Eagle voters in April 2016. The town also hopes to attract \$2 million in grant dollars for the project, leaving a private fundraising goal of nearly \$1.1 million to finish the project. A special citizens committee will be appointed by the town to conduct the private fundraising.

HAVING THEIR SAY

According to Morgan Landers, Eagle assistant town planner, the public meeting hosted by the town two weeks ago focused on five main topics:

- Events and community gatherings
- Park economics
- Pedestrian, bike and auto circulation
- Landscape design and amenities
- River recreation

"Members of the public are in tune with similar ideas and questions and concerns as the steering committee," Landers said. "On the whole, the group was very engaged and I would say that quite a bit of the comments fell into two buckets. There were people interested in the spacial and design elements of the park and people interested in future maintenance issues."

Landers said that more than 250 individual comments were offered in writing during the session. Several issues came to the forefront of park concerns and will be the focus of the next public meeting, planned for Thursday, March 23.

Landers said issues cited during the public meeting included the inclusion of showers in the restroom building and a water feature in the park area, alignment of the trail extension through the park, potential improvements to Chambers Park boat ramp and the location of the historic buildings in Chambers Park.

NEXT STEPS

"There were a lot of those items termed as maintenance issues that came out and those comments were very helpful," said Landers.

"The design team is very pleased and impressed with the turnout of community for the first public meeting. We gained very meaningful and thoughtful feedback that will help us develop a plan for the park that responds to the community needs and preferences," said Pedro Campos of Zehren and Associates.

Likewise town officials noted that local enthusiasm for the park, as evidenced by the public session turnout, remains high.

"When the word was given for folks to start jotting down ideas, the ideas flowed and pens and sticky notes started flying," Eagle Mayor Anne McKibbin said.

For those who couldn't attend the session, its not too late to offer ideas.

Additional public comments about the proposal will be accepted through March 10 online at <http://www.eagleoutside.com/riverpark>.