

Final Recommendations of the RIVER DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

Tulsa, Oklahoma

Presented to the Mayor and Tulsa City Council on
December 6th, 2012

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INTRODUCTION

The *River Development Task Force* was formed by collaboration between the Mayor and Tulsa City Council in April, 2012. The mission assigned to the Task Force was to identify “actionable” items that would optimize the development of the Arkansas River corridor within the city limits of Tulsa.

The initial meeting of the Task Force was held on June 19, 2012. For approximately three months, the Task Force reviewed the current uses of the corridor and discussed concerns and opportunities with a variety of stakeholders including private businesses, landowners, the River Parks Authority (RPA), Muscogee Creek Nation, INCOG, officials of Tulsa County, and various departments within city government. The study area included both banks of the river, existing bridges and overpasses, the existing low water dam at 31st street, adjacent neighborhoods and land areas, and Riverside Drive. We also looked at several proposed uses and developments already being advanced.

RIVER DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Development proposals along the river are reported to date back to the 1920's. Not much was accomplished until about 1974 when river development was proposed as one of several civic projects designed to celebrate the city's 75th birthday. According to the River Parks Authority (RPA) website, community leaders at that time “envisioned public/private partnerships blending open space, industrial, and residential properties into a corridor of public-use areas all along the Arkansas River in Tulsa County”. Subsequently, the River Parks Authority was created to transform the riverfront into a public space that would enhance the neighborhoods, improve environmental quality, and provide space for passive and active recreation. They started with \$2 million in federal urban renewal funds used to adapt the railroad bridge at 29th and Riverside into a pedestrian bridge, and followed with an asphalt recreation trail along the riverbank. Subsequent development included the River West Festival Park, the amphitheater and Reynolds floating stage, Zink Dam and lake, a series of public art installations, and a host of public events. The most recent (and most noticeable) improvements include a new hard surface trail, new foot bridges and other associated amenities spread out along the trail system on both sides of the river, which were privately funded by the George Kaiser Family Foundation (GKFF). The park itself currently includes over 800 acres.

Since 1985, the city has authorized several task forces and hired several consultants to study additional development opportunities, create land use plans, and create master plans to help guide development and protect open spaces along the river corridor. Much of those studies and many of those recommendations were never implemented.

RIVER DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE

The current River Development Task Force was aware of the work that previous task forces and consultant groups proposed and started by reviewing those plans and meeting with consultants and city officials that were involved at the time. Rather than “reinventing the wheel”, the Task Force decided to include those recommendations from previous studies that were still considered to be relevant. Several of the recommendations included in this report were originally proposed in those earlier studies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

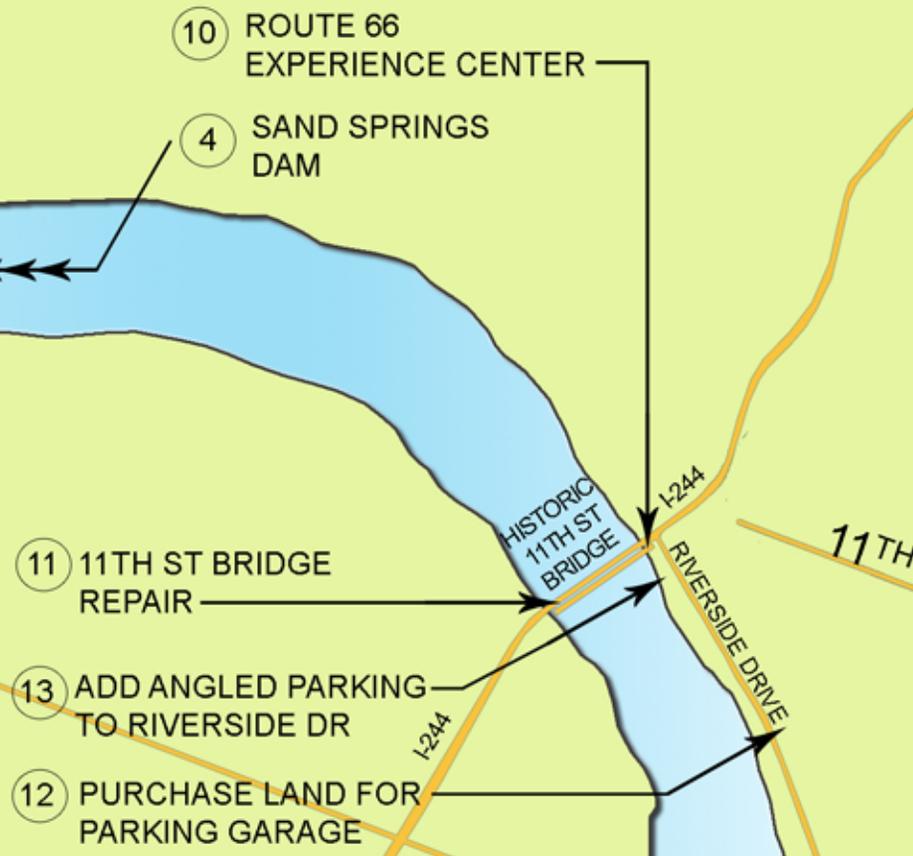
The River Development Task Force believes that sensitive development of the river corridor is an important “quality-of-life” issue that affects the entire city. The river is an obvious natural asset that begs for improvement along its entire length. Opportunities for trail extensions, land acquisitions, passive recreation, sports, commercial development, and other uses abound along both sides of the river. However, the Task Force believes that maintaining “water in the river” is the single most important element for sustained economic development all along the corridor. Toward that end, we believe that an improved Zink Lake dam may be the most effective catalyst to drive future development along the corridor and we’ve listed that as our Primary Recommendation.

The remaining recommendations of the Task Force are not prioritized as they are most likely dependent on funding. For clarity, the Task Force has organized them into five distinct categories:

- A. Infrastructure improvements:** defined as technical public works efforts that will support other public and private developments;
- B. Development opportunities:** Tasks or developments that the city should undertake to encourage future private development;
- C. Parking:** Prospects for creation of additional public parking areas to support public use of corridor amenities;
- D. Riverside Drive:** Opportunities for improvements that will increase safety and support the orderly movement of vehicles along this major thoroughfare.
- E. River Parks:** Opportunities that will directly support the needs of the River Parks Authority.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

TULSA, OK



Primary recommendation:

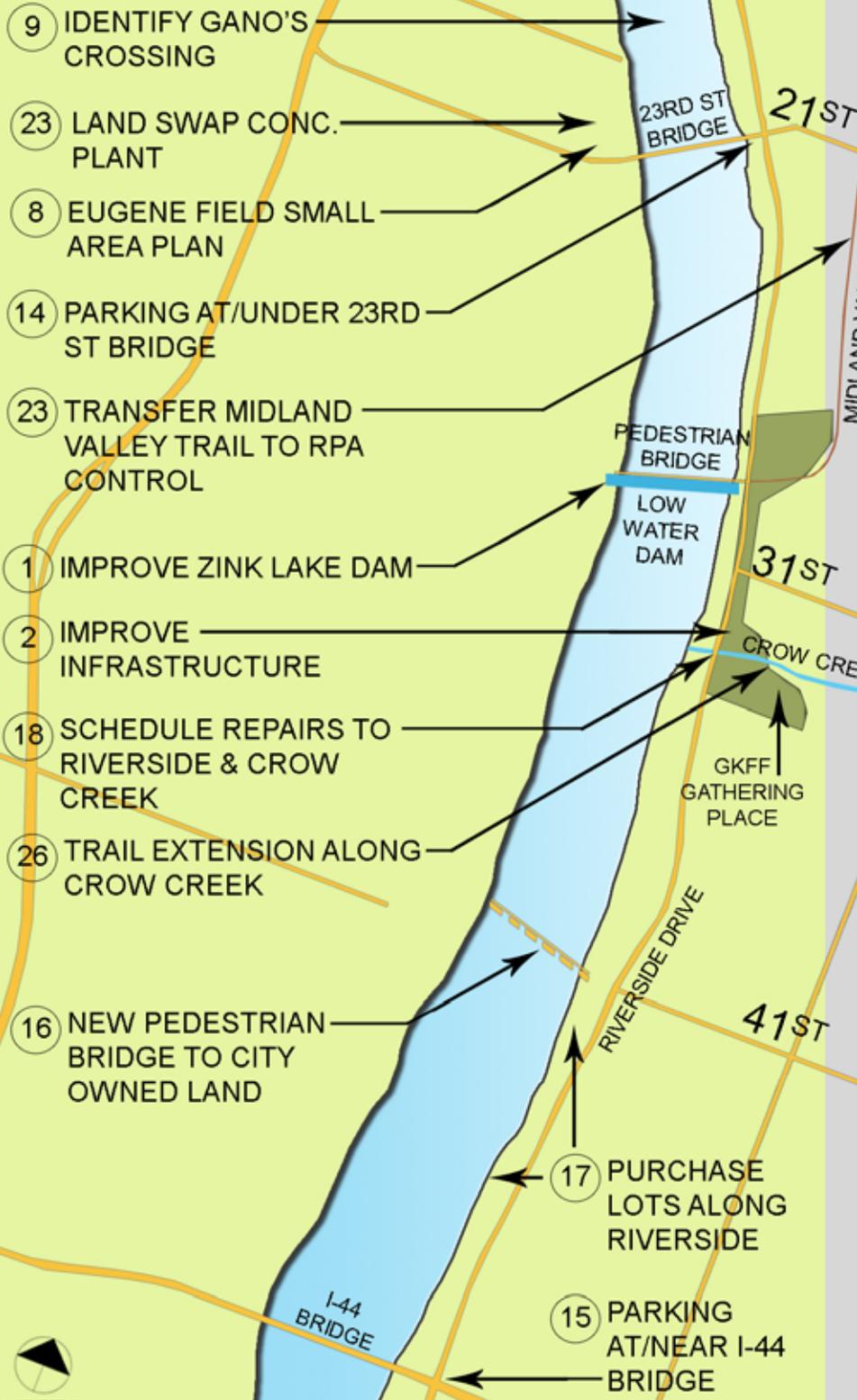
1. Improve/renovate the Zink Lake dam at 31st street to increase and maintain water in the river in accordance with the Arkansas River Corridor Master Plan previously approved by TMAPC, INCOG, Tulsa City Council, and the Tulsa County Commission.

Infrastructure Improvements:

2. Develop a plan to relocate sewer lines and provide utilities as needed to support the proposed recreational activities at 31st street and Riverside Drive.
3. Develop a public/private partnership with the Creek Nation and other interested groups to develop and fund the proposed "South Tulsa/Jenks" dam and pedestrian bridge proposed and approved in the Arkansas River Corridor Master Plan.
4. Hire a lobbyist/consultant to initiate discussions with the Corps of Engineers and federal officials to secure funding for the reconstruction of the Sand Springs dam, which was originally authorized by Congress in the 2007 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA 2007). Involve the City of Sand Springs and officials from Tulsa County.

THE GATHERING PLACE/CROW CREEK



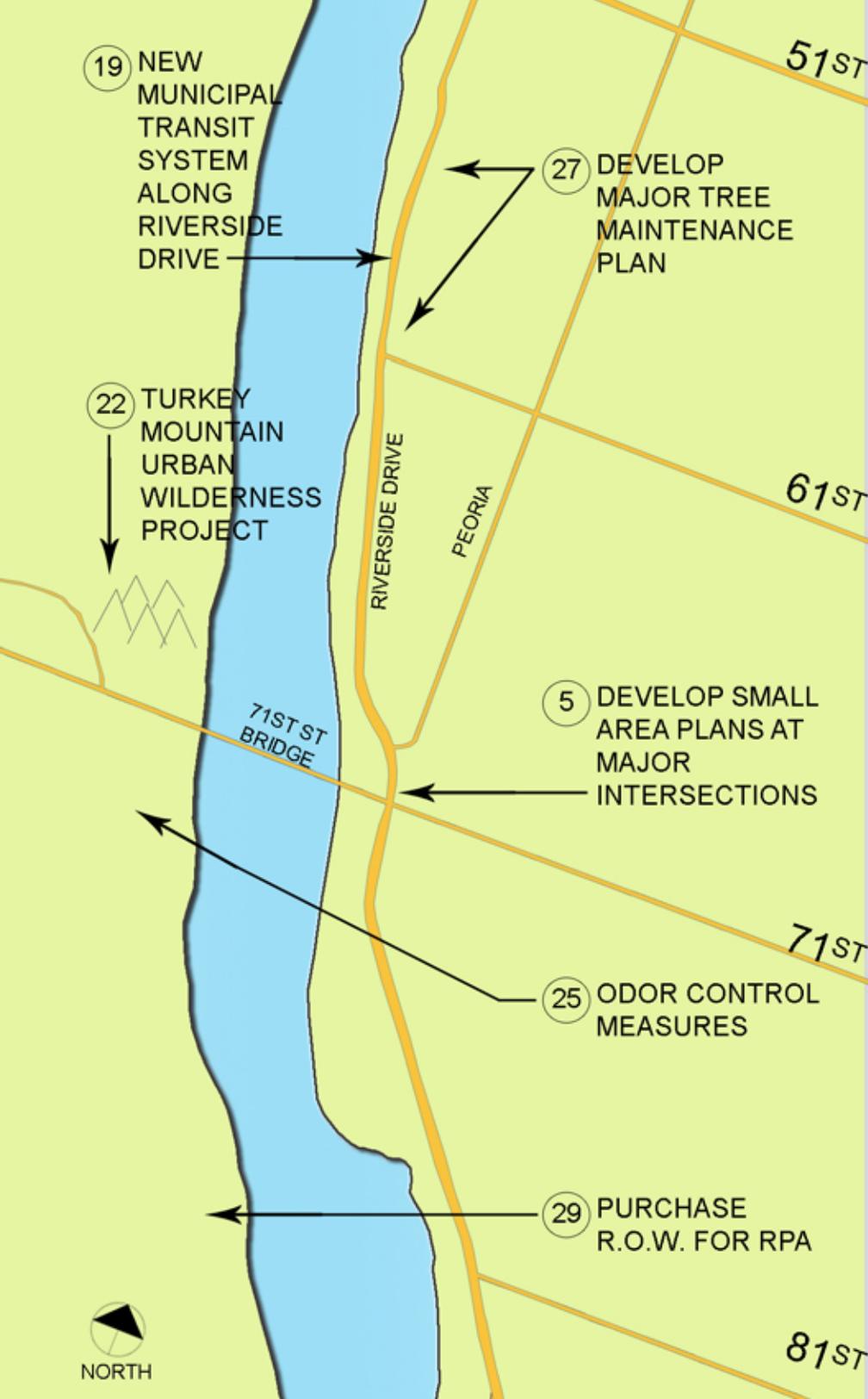


Development opportunities:

5. Develop a series of "small area plans" that define, locate, and capitalize on development "nodes" at major intersections along the river from 11th street to 121st street.
6. Investigate the potential for localized TIFF districts along the river corridor.
7. Purchase and/or encourage river-compatible uses of all private land within the river corridor from county line to county line.
8. Coordinate with, and encourage, the Eugene Field neighborhood small-area planning team to consider potential amenities for, and needs of, the river corridor as it passes through the planning area currently being reviewed.
9. Identify the historic "Gano's River Crossing" by signage and nominate it to the National Register of Historic Places.
10. Complete the planned Route 66 "Experience" Center at 11th and Riverside.
11. Repair the 11th street bridge to enhance the Route 66 experience and allow pedestrian access.



ROUTE 66 "EXPERIENCE" PROJECT



19 NEW MUNICIPAL TRANSIT SYSTEM ALONG RIVERSIDE DRIVE

22 TURKEY MOUNTAIN URBAN WILDERNESS PROJECT

27 DEVELOP MAJOR TREE MAINTENANCE PLAN

5 DEVELOP SMALL AREA PLANS AT MAJOR INTERSECTIONS

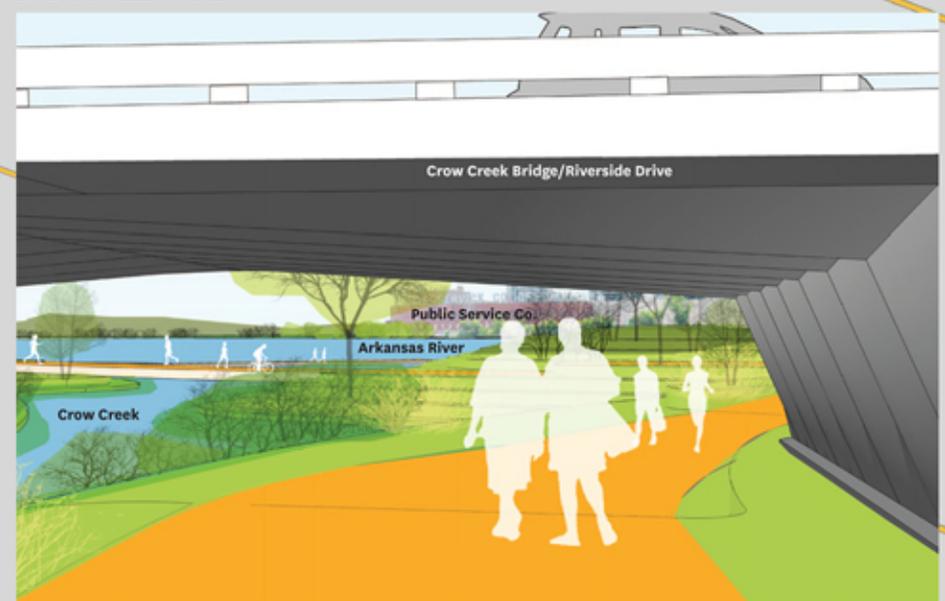
25 ODOR CONTROL MEASURES

29 PURCHASE R.O.W. FOR RPA

Parking:

- 12. Consider purchasing land (currently for sale) at Denver and Riverside (known as the Denver Park Apartments) for development of a multi-level municipal parking facility.
- 13. Add as much 60 degree angled parking along the west side of Riverside Drive from 11th street to 17th street as is possible without removal of any healthy, mature trees.
- 14. Evaluate the potential for additional parking under and adjacent to the 21st street bridge on Riverside Drive and move the RPA trail to the river's edge to avoid cross traffic.
- 15. Work with ODOT to determine the feasibility of developing parking areas under and adjacent to the new I-44 bridge at 51st and Riverside Drive, as well as any other elevated freeways within the river corridor.
- 16. Determine the feasibility of a new pedestrian bridge at 41st street to connect with underutilized city-owned land on the west bank and increase options for trail users.

CROW CREEK TRAIL



20 RELOCATE RIVER TRAIL

CREEK NATION CASINO

24 FACILITATE TRAIL RENOVATION

96TH ST BRIDGE

RIVERSIDE DRIVE

91ST

CREEK TURNPIKE

3 WORK WITH CREEK NATION TO DEVELOP AND FUND A SOUTH TULSA LOW WATER DAM

101ST

6 INVESTIGATE POTENTIAL FOR LOCALIZED TIFF DISTRICTS

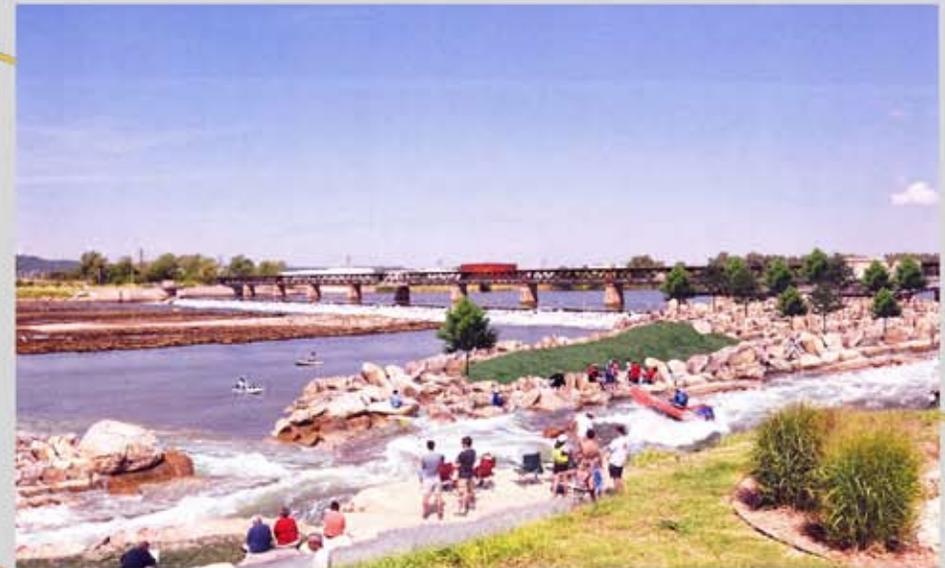
111TH



Riverside Drive:

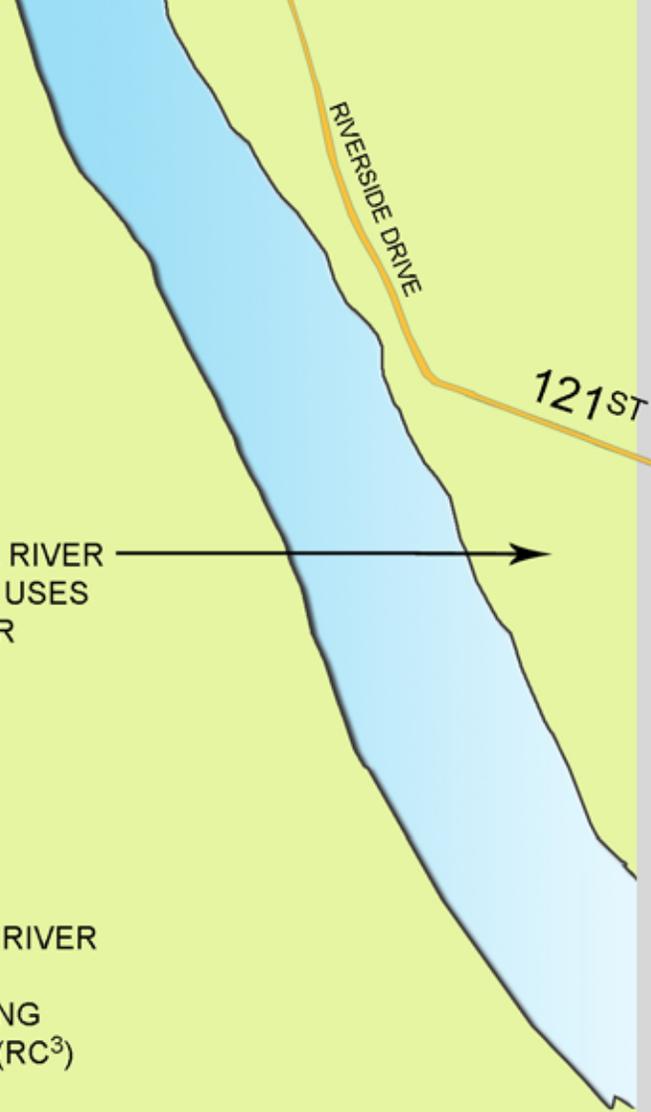
- 17. To improve public safety, purchase residential properties that front on Riverside Drive (especially at major intersections) as lots become available. Subsequently, remove the structures and reforest the properties.
- 18. Schedule previously funded repairs to Riverside Drive and Crow Creek to coordinate with proposed plans being developed by GKFF.
- 19. Work with INCOG and MTTA to implement a municipal transit system along Riverside Drive. Include bus stops located out of traffic at each of the major intersections for the entire length of the Drive.

LOW WATER DAM/WHITewater EXPERIENCE



7 ENCOURAGE RIVER COMPATIBLE USES WITHIN RIVER CORRIDOR

30 ESTABLISH A RIVER CORRIDOR COORDINATING COMMITTEE (RC³)



River Parks:

20. Work with RPA and the Creek Nation to finalize negotiations on a plan to relocate the river trail away from Riverside Drive at the Creek Nation Casino property at 81st and Riverside.
21. Evaluate the potential for a “land swap” with the privately owned concrete plant on the west bank at 23rd street to gain additional riverfront land for development of the River West Festival Park.
22. Participate in the “urban wilderness” concept that area donors are interested in developing on Turkey Mountain by offering to lease adjacent city owned land to RPA.
23. Provide adequate funding and transfer maintenance and oversight of the Midland Valley trail to RPA.
24. Facilitate trail renovation and right-of-way expansion along the existing eagle preserve from the Creek Nation Casino to 96th street by allocating corresponding acreage in Cousins Park for use as habitat replacement.
25. Define and implement odor control for the existing wastewater lift stations along the river trails.
26. Encourage, support, and help plan a pedestrian connection along the banks of Crow Creek from the River Parks trail to Peoria Avenue.
27. Evaluate all major trees located on public property along the river corridor and develop a plan for long term care, pruning, and maintenance.
28. Negotiate a long term lease with ODOT for the (recently improved) Midland Valley railroad right-of-way east of Riverside Drive.
29. Assist RPA in acquiring right-of-way along the west bank of the river from 71st to the city limits of Jenks.
30. Our final recommendation is to task the River Parks Authority with the responsibility to establish a River Corridor Coordinating Committee to provide oversight, help coordinate efforts, disseminate information, and minimize confusion.

TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Herb Fritz, Chairman
Seth Erkenbeck
Joe Robson
Jeff Stava
Rick Westcott

STAFF

Jane Zeigler, City Council Aide
Keri Fothergil, Constituent Services, Mayor's office

GUEST SPEAKERS

Chris Benge – Tulsa Chamber of Commerce
Rich Brierre – INCOG
Mark Brown – Traffic Operations Manager, City of Tulsa
Jim Coles – City of Tulsa
J.D. Colbert – Muskogee Creek Nation
Kirby Crowe – PMG
Amanda DeCort – Tulsa Preservation Commission
David Giacomo – Tulsa Parking Authority, City of Tulsa
Karen Keith – Tulsa County Commissioner
Dan MacMahan – McMahan & Vernon, P.C.
Jim McCarthy – River Parks Authority
Matt Meyer – River Parks Authority
Ted Reeds – Blue Rose Restaurant
Lisa Simpson – Traffic Engineering, City of Tulsa
Henry Som de Cerff – Engineering Department, City of Tulsa
Delise Tomlinson- Tulsa Chamber of Commerce
Dawn Warrick – Director of Planning and Economic Development, City of Tulsa