



Michael Stoklos

Globe Greenbelt Renews a Town

By Debra Woodruff

Pinal Creek meanders around and through Globe, an Arizona town in the midst of the Tonto National Forest. Rebuilding the creek will rejuvenate the town, and perhaps the entire area.

The Globe Greenbelt is a new venture for the University of Arizona Gila County Cooperative Extension that will allow this community to delve into the potential of its natural resources, says county Extension director Bill Frost.

The emerging idea is to serve the population of Globe — roughly 6,000 people, with another 4,000 nearby — with an environmental recreational area, a wildlife habitat, a means for alternative travel by bicycle or foot, and new economic possibilities. The Greenbelt would be along the 2.5 mile Pinal Creek that moves through the middle of town.

Frost emphasizes that Cooperative Extension would not build the Greenbelt; they will kick things off by studying the economic and environmental feasibilities of the development. Extension would help create a master plan for the Greenbelt — so the city could explore options and find financing. A similar study would cost about \$50,000 if purchased, but the city of Globe will receive it for a minimal cost — just enough to cover expenses — from the UA Extension staff.

"The hope, in the end, is that the Greenbelt will enhance the image of Globe and make it a nicer place to live," Frost says.

He told Charles M. Poster, an architect and UA Community Leadership and Resource Development specialist, about the dream of Globe's mayor to turn the meandering Pinal Creek into a Greenbelt. Poster, who works at the UA Drachman Institute for Land and Regional Development Studies, has been involved in watercourse urban planning in other parts of Arizona. When he arrived in Globe in May, 1991, he found a growing awareness of the value of their historic watercourse system.

"Watercourses are not nuisances as people once assumed — they're amenities," Poster says. "For too long, urban design has been dictated by cars, and that mode of transportation has created city grids. But watercourses often run contrary to the automobile

grid. Watercourses have their own logic, which encourages opportunities for walking and bicycle trails."

Unfortunately, in many places, streams and creeks are sealed up so no one has to bother with them, or so the flow of automobiles won't be disrupted. But Poster found that the state of the system in Globe was not too bad.

"The creek had been ignored, but at least it's been a benign treatment," Poster says. "There's been no major degradation."

He discovered that the potential Greenbelt was rich with cottonwoods and other native vegetation. Bridges criss-crossed the creek. It runs through downtown and the oldest sections of town, and then spreads out into an intricate riparian area.

"It's absolutely a treasure," Poster says.

A town meeting held at the time of Poster's visit proved that many Globe citizens, too, are ready to take action on the watercourse. Nancy Marcanti, the grants coordinator for the city manager's office, says it was one of the most well-attended meetings ever.

"The room was full at 11 a.m., in the middle of the week," she says in amazement.

Poster also felt the excitement of the people of Globe at the initial meeting. "Older people were there who use the creek for bird watching. People were there who already use it for early morning walks. The project faced no opposition at that meeting."

Poster says Cooperative Extension will proceed with the Globe project with a three-part study. First, Frost and UA students will gather information and do feasibility research.

"We need some facts about the watercourse itself," Poster says. "For instance, who owns it all? The city may need to acquire some land."

Also, they will study the current uses for the creek bank and examine the hydrology, including flood danger. Also, an environmental quality inventory needs to be taken and all the infrastructure — water, sewer, telephone lines — need to be catalogued.

The second phase of the study will allow Poster and students from the UA College of Architecture and students in Planning and Landscape Architecture



Charles M. Poster



Bill Frost

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to develop a schematic — a master plan — of ways to approach the project. The plan will be highly conceptual, with plenty of room for alternatives at this point, but it will begin to take Globe in a positive direction.

"We're looking for several alternatives for the city to consider," Frost said. "Then they can select the one that best fits and go out to look for funding."

The third part of the study will have UA students create demonstration projects along the creek to show how the master plan can be put into effect.

"And all along we will be gathering input from people in Globe. We'll create a publicity campaign," Poster says. For instance, Saturday morning clean-up promotions will get the citizens out to "experience the potential of the creek." Slide shows and photograph collections will help people get to know a beautiful resource.

Marcanti says that the relationship between Globe and the UA Extension has so far been excellent. "We know if this Greenbelt is developed properly, it will be a gift," Marcanti said.

Globe was settled by miners because of the creek bed, Marcanti says. That makes reclaiming riparian areas and cottonwood trees that are a part of the

history of Globe an even more attractive solution. Also, the squirrels, rabbits and many variety of birds that have always lived along the creek will be preserved.

The city also hopes to gain economic advantages from the Greenbelt, said Marcanti. For instance, the back of many of the town's businesses face the creek. Developing a "green" recreation area may encourage them to clean up the back of their buildings and open them up to customers. Also, people driving through Globe may like the new Greenbelt so well that they'll stay.

"We'd like to catch as many people as possible as they're coming through," Marcanti says.

"This study will be an educational process for the community," Poster says. "They'll see that good design leads to good results. Our goal is to start the process, then move on to other communities."

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