



## **Hayes Valley**

**February 18, 2009 ~ 6-8 pm ~ Ella Hill Hutch Community Center**

***Hosted by: Community Partners United***

*Approximate number of attendees: 20*

## **AGENDA**

### **WELCOME & OVERVIEW OF OPEN SPACE IN SAN FRANCISCO: Why it Matters**

*- Meredith Thomas, Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC)*

Opening up the workshop, Meredith Thomas of the Neighborhood Parks Council greeted the participants and expressed her gratitude to Community Partners United for their hard work in sponsoring the workshop. Next, Meredith reviewed the City's effort to address the challenges of Open Space in San Francisco through the Mayor's Open Space Task Force launched in 2007. She described the key outcomes of this outreach phase of the task force:

- 1) Garnering public ideas and vision to incorporate in a long-term (100 year) Vision Plan for Open Space in San Francisco;
- 2) Creating a ranked priority list of the public's views on what open space issues are most important to tackle and in what order;
- 3) Publishing an Action Plan for the next 5-10 years with all the best ideas from our workshops and from online participation.

Meredith also touched upon the importance of having a good geographic representation of people participating in the workshop series, and mentioned that the Neighborhood Parks Council has been actively engaging a variety neighborhood groups in order to ensure comprehensive representation in the ongoing workshop series.

## **POLICY FRAMEWORK: ROSE**

- Sarah Dennis, S.F. Planning Department

Sarah Dennis of the San Francisco Planning Department next spoke about the Department's revision of the Recreation & Open Space Element (ROSE) of the City's General Plan. The ROSE, written in 1986, is comprised of over-arching objectives related to open space that have a set of associated policies for each objective. The newest version aims to have actionable and specific implementation steps linked to each policy that are universal across agencies. Community input on the revised policies and implementation steps of the ROSE is strongly desired. During her presentation, Sarah noted that the reason for initiating the update is that the current version is out of date and consequently lacks the status it should have as a strong, guiding policy document for the City. She summarized her presentation by mentioning the City's goal of establishing a 5-10 Year Action Plan along with a 100-year Vision Plan for Open Space; both of these documents will utilize the information gathered in the community workshop series. The City aims to have the final draft of the ROSE revision ready for review by late spring of 2009.

Sarah also gave a brief summary of the Market Octavia Area Plan, which directly affects the Hayes Valley area. This plan focuses on park and streetscape improvements and has already begun to take effect. Sarah noted that Patricia's Green has been completed, renovations to Hayes Playground will be taking place in the near future, a "living alley" has been planned for Linden St., and a community garden is in the works near McCoppin Street.

Upon completion of Sarah's presentation, a workshop participant asked a question about the nature of assessment districts. In response, Sarah mentioned that this concept revolves around the self-imposed financing and funding of open spaces within a specific area, and the idea is currently being examined through a few pilot projects. Meredith Thomas of NPC also noted that similar opportunities exist within the realm of the Landscape & Lighting Assessment Act, which requires 30% of nearby property owner's support.

An additional question was asked about the status of the Livable Streets Program, to which Sarah Dennis responded that the program is now awaiting approval of a 9-month long environmental review process.

## **BREAK-OUT SESSION: Process & Outcomes**

- Dee Dee Workman, Host

Following the Policy Framework presentation, Host Dee Dee Workman briefly provided instructions for the workshop's breakout session and reminded the group about the value of their input. She requested that the participants fill out the feedback materials and then prompted group discussion by having each table explore the following central questions:

- "What are the most successful parks and open spaces in your neighborhood?"
- "What are some ways that people can help improve parks and open spaces in your neighborhood?"

Additionally, Dee Dee requested that each table reserve roughly 20 minutes at the end of their conversation in order to distill their top five priorities for open space as a group, both in their neighborhood *and* in the City, from a list of options that had been provided.

## **COMMUNITY CONVERSATION: Challenges & Opportunities vis a vis Open Space in San Francisco**

### Break-out Session

During this time, each table engaged in a dynamic, free-flowing discussion that responded to the two central questions, while also raising other issues about open space in the neighborhood and the city. The major concepts/ideas that emerged from the discussion were selected by each table to discuss with the larger group.

### Distill Priorities

For this portion of the workshop, each table came to consensus on their top priorities for open space and then recorded these on Open Space Priorities form that had been provided.

### **REPORT BACK: Top 5 ideas/priorities presented from each group**

- *Dee Dee Workman, Host*

A representative from each table shared the main ideas and priorities from their group. The comments from each table are listed below:

#### Table 1

Major concepts from discussion

- Safety is very important – a park must provide a feeling of security to the people using it.
- Maintenance of existing parks is a priority, and the bar needs to be raised on this.
- Activate parks through creative programming – encourage participation in a fun way.
- Every new development should require the development of public open space through the use of impact fees.
- Increase park usage by kids by providing creative activities.
- Provide adequate programming in parks as a way to help with general maintenance.
- Build a successful foundation for public/private partnerships – this will help alleviate the fear that city works will lose their jobs if citizens volunteer to help maintain their parks.

Priorities – Neighborhood (*specific order not stated*)

- General Maintenance
- Safety
- Open schoolyards for public access
- Increase open space for sports fields
- Other – provide flat open space for sports
- Other – increase community partnerships/stewards

Priorities – Citywide

- General Maintenance
- Safety
- Open schoolyards for public access
- Other – impact fees on new developments to provide funding for open spaces/parks

## Table 2

### Major concepts from discussion

- Need to develop more park spaces – i.e. Fulton Mall, create linking green spaces.
- Alleys (i.e. Linden), vacant lots, and redevelopment parcels should be part of the parks system – many of these can be temporarily used as dog runs or for food production, etc.
- Streamline the bureaucratic process in order to make it easier for people to get involved – this doesn't require reinventing the wheel; one example would be to publish some "greening for dummies" literature or develop a clearinghouse of helpful information.
- Parks help to transform neighborhoods by bringing kids out to play and reinforcing a feeling of community.

### Priorities – Neighborhood (*specific order not stated*)

- More amenities & activities to serve the needs of the community (specifically: 1. Larger green spaces, 2. Playgrounds, 3. Dog runs)
- Safety – focusing on public access as a solution
- Develop existing public right-of-ways into linear parks
- Develop opportunity site, open spaces for food production
- Other – remove bureaucracy & streamline involvement process to allow more substantial community investment in parks

### Priorities – Citywide (*specific order not stated*)

- Other – increase green open spaces in areas with greater density

## Table 3

### Major concepts from discussion

- Use real grass instead of turf whenever there is an option.
- Open up schoolyards for public use – both after school and on the weekends.
- Promote community gardening – joining food production, education, and nutrition programs.
- Incorporate small-scale commercial opportunities (i.e. coffee kiosks) into parks in order to fund maintenance.
- Have volunteers bring new members to the parks – increase volunteerism.
- Explore the implementation of assessment districts.
- Create/maintain flat areas where people can play sports/run around.
- Utilize programs and events to get people out to parks – i.e. BBQ's.
- Encourage kids to become park stewards, not just park users.

### Priorities – Neighborhood (*specific order not stated*)

- More amenities & activities to serve the needs of the community
- Renovations to existing parks
- Open schoolyards for public access
- Develop open space for food production
- Conserve the resources that the City already has

### Priorities – Citywide

1. Open schoolyards for public access

## Table 4

### Major concepts from discussion

- Park renovation should be open and inclusive.
- The most successful parks feature community involvement in maintaining facilities
- There is a great desire for more community gardens
- Focus on the creative reinvisioning of open space (especially in smaller spaces), focusing on creating variety to accommodate changing interests.
- Consider social justice in determining park function – make sure people will want to come back without gentrification.
- Integrate public art into parks and open spaces.
- Try to reflect the cultural landscape of the community through a park's design.
- Prioritize good design of public spaces.

### Priorities – Neighborhood

1. Renovations to existing parks
2. General maintenance
3. Safety
4. Develop open space for food production
5. Other: build more sidewalk/pocket gardens

### Priorities – Citywide

1. Develop open space for food production
2. Acquire new open space in neighborhoods with a deficit
3. Adequate general maintenance
3. Develop publicly-owned land along the waterfront into open space
3. Secure open space with high quality natural features

## **NEXT STEPS & CLOSING**

- *Meredith Thomas, NPC*

### Staying Involved

Meredith Thomas from the Neighborhood Parks Council noted that the bridges between tonight's meeting and the implementation of the 100 year Vision Plan for open space in San Francisco are initiating a number of community-driven projects to improve and maintain our parks, plazas, green streets, and open spaces and keeping meeting participants active in sustaining our investment in open space even through times of economic scarcity. She specifically referred to the Community Challenge Grant Program, which provides up to \$100,000 several times a year; and the 2008 Neighborhood Parks Bond, which includes a \$5 million Community Opportunity Fund for neighborhood parks projects. Meredith also mentioned that NPC and other community organizations can act as a fiscal sponsor to neighborhood groups inspired to enhance their local open space; projects could include greening a street median or starting a community garden.

Meredith also reviewed the 'Meeting in a Box' - a handout created to have meeting attendees take back to their friends and neighbors and hold a conversation about open space issues in their neighborhood and in San Francisco and setting priorities for limited resources. Input captured by these small group discussions will be integrated with data and ideas gathered at the larger workshops and used to inform the ROSE update and the Action Plan. In addition to the 'Meeting in a Box' exercise, workshop participants were asked to visit the Open Space 2100 website and take the online survey. Available at [www.openspacesf.org/survey](http://www.openspacesf.org/survey), the survey

collects individual priorities and values regarding open space in San Francisco, and is a very valuable source of information for the aforementioned plans. Meredith also noted that participants would be able to access these meeting notes on the Open Space 2100 website.

### Closing Remarks

Meredith Thomas thanked the workshop participants for coming, and the Neighborhood Parks Council staff for their hard work in putting on the community workshop. She also gave a special thanks to Jim Wheeler of the Recreation and Parks Department, and Vallie Brown from Supervisor Mirkarimi's office for taking the time to attend to the community workshop.

