



## **Miraloma**

**March 4, 2009 ~ 6-8 pm ~ 350 Oshaughnessy Blvd.**

**Hosted by: Miraloma Park Improvement Club**

*Approximate number of attendees: 10*

## **AGENDA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

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

Opening up the workshop, Meredith Thomas of the Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) greeted the participants and thanked Jed Lane and the Miraloma Park Improvement Club for their help in sponsoring the workshop.

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

*- Meredith Thomas, NPC*

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 given the different open space needs of various communities. She elaborated on this by mentioning that the Neighborhood Parks Council has been actively engaging a variety of neighborhood groups in order to ensure comprehensive

representation in the ongoing workshop series. In summarizing the overview of open space in San Francisco, Meredith addressed the fact that while some parts of the City have sufficient amounts of public open space, others are severely lacking.

### **POLICY FRAMEWORK: ROSE**

- *Sue Exline, S.F. Planning Department*

Sue Exline 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. During her presentation, Sue noted that the reason for initiating the update is that the current version is out of date and consequently lacks the status it should have as a strong, guiding policy document for the City. Community input on the revised policies and implementation steps of the ROSE is strongly desired. 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.

Upon completion of Sue's presentation, a question was asked regarding how the City defines "open space". In response, Sue mentioned that it is an excellent question and that hopefully the workshop participants will be the ones who help define what "open space" means in San Francisco. She elaborated though by stating that the City's current view on the concept includes a wide range of possibilities from traditional green spaces, to mini parks, green streets, and even waterfront promenades.

### **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

- Focus on improving connectivity and accessibility between and within open spaces – specifically, larger open spaces should be made more accessible (i.e. trail/path improvements) in order to maximize existing potential.
- Transit is a vital component of open space and the two should always be connected.
- Employ intelligent, multi-modal transit options that promote flexibility and ease.
- The City needs to make an effort to promote its open spaces so that more people know what is actually available.
- Prioritize making the most of what already exists – i.e. keep existing bathrooms open, utilize additional space like schoolyards and covered reservoirs.

Priorities – Neighborhood (*specific order not stated*)

- Better access to parks to parks (ped., bike, transit)
- General maintenance
- Open schoolyards for public access
- Secure open space with high quality natural features
- Other: secure public lands for future public use – i.e. if a hospital or school closes, the land should still be used by the public (not sold to developers)

Priorities – Citywide (*specific order not stated*)

- More amenities & activities to serve the needs of the community
- General maintenance
- Develop existing public right-of-ways into linear parks
- Develop open space for food production
- Other: utilize existing open areas – i.e. reservoirs and schoolyards

## Table 2

### Major concepts from discussion

- Focus on providing more amenities – i.e. recreation opportunities, drinking fountains, bathrooms, benches, etc.
- Prioritize making renovations to existing parks.
- Establish better access to parks – *especially* more pedestrian friendly *modes of travel*.
- Improve communication between communities and ALL of the agencies that have open space.
- Try to make volunteerism fun again – volunteers should be able to & want to partner with the City to maintain parks.
- Utilize Park Improvement Districts.

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

- Renovations to existing parks
- Develop existing public right-of-ways into linear parks
- More amenities & activities to serve the needs of the community
- Secure open space with high quality natural features
- Better access to parks (ped., bike, transit)

### Priorities – Citywide

No Citywide priorities provided

## **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 the 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. In addition, Meredith pointed out that roughly \$5.8 million has been set aside for improvements to Glen Park, with planning starting this year (2009) and design to follow in 2010. She then addressed some of the concerns raised during the table discussions about the Recreation & Parks Department, stating that while there is an urgent need to get the Department to help cut the red tape that prevents people from being more involved, the community must also be careful not to make rash decisions regarding open space in San Francisco given the precarious state of the economy.

Meredith also reviewed the 'Meeting in a Box' - a handout created to have meeting attendees take back to their friends and neighbors to hold a conversation about open space issues in their neighborhood and in San Francisco, and set 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. She then finished the Staying Involved portion of the workshop by mentioning that the Neighborhood Parks Council is in the process of setting up a fall/winter conference on open space that will showcase the outcomes of the ongoing community workshop series.

### 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 thanked Jed Lane and the Miraloma Park Improvement Club for their help in organizing the workshop. In addition, Meredith also expressed thanks to Sue Exline of the Planning Department for attending.