



Mission Dolores Park/Noe Valley

March 24, 2009 ~ 6-8 pm ~ Upper Noe Recreation Center

Hosted by: Friends of Upper Noe Recreation Center & Friends of Noe Valley

Approximate number of attendees: 12

AGENDA

INTRODUCTION

- Isabel Wade, Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC)

Opening up the workshop, Isabel Wade of the Neighborhood Parks Council greeted the workshop participants and thanked them for coming. She then introduced Sue Exline from the Department of City Planning, Mike Kritzman from NPC staff, and the workshop's host Dee Dee Workman.

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

- Isabel Wade, NPC

Next, Isabel proceeded to explain the importance of having a discussion about Open Space. She noted that while the Noe Valley area is fortunate in that it has more open space per capita than any other district in the City, the issue of whether or not the neighborhood's needs are met does remain. In addition, Isabel brought up the importance of establishing successful maintenance practices to ensure that the existing facilities and open spaces are kept up. She also mentioned that the Neighborhood Parks Council is looking for projects to take on related to parks and open space, and that the participants' ideas and input about their neighborhood were extremely valuable. In summarizing her overview of open space in San Francisco, Isabel pointed out that the Recreation & Parks Department has had to make some significant budget cuts and as a result it is imperative that the Community makes an effort to talk to RPD, attend public meetings, and organize themselves in order to guarantee the success of their local parks and open spaces.

After this brief overview, Isabel 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.

POLICY FRAMEWORK: ROSE

- *Susan 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. One of the goals of this effort is to establish a 5-10 Year Action Plan along with a 100-year Vision Plan for Open Space. Community input on the revised policies and implementation steps of the ROSE is strongly desired, with public feedback being incorporated into the document's second draft. Sue summarized her presentation by mentioning that the City aims to have this next draft of the ROSE revision ready for review by late spring of 2009. The current draft and policies are available for review on the City's website (<http://openspace.sfplanning.org/>).

Following Sue's presentation, a question was asked trying to clarify whether or not the final draft of the ROSE update would be done in May. In response, Sue stated that it was the second draft of the document that the City is trying to finish by that time, and not the final product.

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 in helping to shape the nature of the City's parks. 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 serving under-represented age groups – specifically older kids/teenagers who currently have very little to do in the City's existing parks and open spaces (*leaving lights on longer and keeping the spaces they use most open later are a couple of ways to address this*).
- Create more stewardship opportunities and provide easier access for volunteers.
- Make the most of small existing spaces through the use of creative programming (i.e. skate parks, climbing walls, etc.)

Priorities – Neighborhood

1. More amenities & activities to serve the needs of the community
2. General maintenance
3. Safety
4. Open schoolyards for public access
5. Acquire new open space for recreational facilities

Priorities – Citywide

1. General maintenance
2. More amenities & activities to serve the needs of the community
3. Develop open space for food production
4. Acquire new open space for recreational facilities
5. Open schoolyards for public access

Table 2

Major concepts from discussion

- Address under-utilized open spaces – make sure that the neighborhood’s parks serve various age and user groups (i.e. teens are considerably underserved), and that the existing open spaces are used to their fullest potential.
- Promote community gardening – this is a perfect way to deal with under-utilized areas (especially *underperforming* grass lawns); incorporating community gardening into school curriculum would promote stewardship amongst the youth; and the gardens can be used to generate additional revenue for local parks/facilities.
- Maintenance is the top priority – the area has a lot of good parks so it is important to figure out how to keep them well maintained.

Priorities – Neighborhood

1. General maintenance
2. Better access to parks (ped., bike, transit)
3. Develop open space for food production
4. Open schoolyards for public access
5. Increase open space for sports fields

Priorities – Citywide

1. General maintenance
2. Safety
3. More amenities & activities to serve the needs of the community
4. Better access to parks (ped., bike, transit)
5. Open schoolyards for public access

NEXT STEPS & CLOSING

- *Isabel Wade, NPC*

Staying Involved

Isabel Wade from the Neighborhood Parks Council mentioned 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 are keeping meeting participants active in sustaining our investment in open space even through times of economic scarcity. She referred to the Community Challenge Grant Program, which provides up to \$100,000 several times a year; the 2008 Neighborhood Parks Bond, which includes a \$5 million Community Opportunity Fund for neighborhood parks projects; and the Park, Recreation, and Open Space Advisory Committee (PROSAC), which is an additional source for the acquisition of open space. Isabel also mentioned that NPC works with a network of over 120 park groups and community organizations, and can be valuable resource for people looking to initiate volunteer efforts such as workdays or fundraising.

Isabel then 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, the survey collects individual priorities and values regarding open space in San Francisco, and is a very

valuable source of information for the City. Isabel also noted that participants would be able to access these meeting notes on the Open Space 2100 website.

Following her discussion of the ways in which people can stay involved, Isabel was asked if she could provide some clarification on the relationship between the Neighborhood Parks Council and the City's Recreation & Parks Department. Isabel responded that essentially NPC and RPD work together to act as stewards for the City's parks. She gave a few examples, including the ParkScan program and the current Open Space Workshop series. Isabel also noted that the Neighborhood Parks Council acts as an advocate for the community, meaning that it will point out issues or problems with the parks, and then work to make sure that those issues get solved.

Closing Remarks

Finally, Isabel thanked the participants for coming, and the Neighborhood Parks Council staff for their hard work in putting on the community workshop. She also thanked Susan Exline of the Planning Department for attending.