



Mission District

February 19, 2009 ~ 6:30-8:30 pm ~ Brava Theater

Hosted by: Lower 24th St. Merchant & Neighborhood Association

Approximate number of attendees: 14

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 Lower 24th St. Merchant & Neighborhood Association 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

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

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 During her presentation, Sue noted that the reason for initiating the update is that the current version is out of date and consequently lacks the status it should have as a strong, guiding policy document for the City.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

Sue also gave a brief overview of some of the Planning Department's current efforts that directly affect the Mission District. She mentioned that the on-going Mission Streetscape Plan effort is having its next public meeting on March 11th from 6:30-8:30 pm, with the purpose of trying to determine what streets should be involved, and what these streets should be like upon completion. Additionally, Sue mentioned that the Mission Area Plan was officially adopted in January and has resulted, among other things, in a new park being built at 17th St. & Folsom St., funding provided for Mission Playground renovations, the beginning of "green streets" program implementation, and an increase in the area's open space requirements.

Upon completion of Sue's presentation, a question was asked about the nature of the outreach for the workshop series, specifically in regards to the difference between physical versus electronic notification. In response, Meredith Thomas of NPC explained that the Neighborhood Parks Council has been conducting extensive outreach, and with the help of the Lower 24th St. Merchant & Neighborhood Association had posted numerous flyers along the 24th St. Corridor. In addition, Meredith also mentioned that notices about the community workshop had been submitted to several neighborhood publications, neighborhood groups, and District Supervisors. In summarizing NPC's outreach efforts, she touched on the fact that the open space workshops are part of an on-going effort, in which the public needs to continue to stay informed in order to continue pushing the effort forward.

BREAK-OUT SESSION: Process & Outcomes

- *Kelly Quirke, Host*

Following the Policy Framework presentation, Host Kelly Quirke briefly provided instructions for the workshop's breakout session and reminded the group about the value of their input. He 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, Kelly 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

- Kelly Quirke, 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

- Establish a sense of identity in parks in order to foster feelings of ownership – this also relates to maintenance.
- Promote community participation.
- Use creative approaches to create *informal* open spaces where none currently exists.
- *Prioritize* making a park safe because this makes the space and surrounding area feel more welcoming.
- Investigate opportunities and creative ways to manage resources that rethink the conventional relationships between the City and its existing resources – i.e. daylighting creeks in handling stormwater runoff, installing wind turbines or mills,
- Utilize programming to attract more people to parks – relates to safety.

Priorities – Neighborhood (*specific order not stated*)

- Safety – the perceived feeling of being safe
- Other – create ownership/pride of public spaces
- Other – employ a creative use of existing ecological resources
- Other – use programming to attract more people to parks

Priorities – Citywide

- Safety
- Secure open space with high quality natural features
- Other – increase neighborhood involvement in parks

Table 2

Major concepts from discussion

- Ensure that parks are safe, clean, well lit, and open longer.
- Offer programming that engages the local community – i.e. community gardens, rec. centers, uses tailored for children
- Encourage events (both formal and informal) that provide an opportunity for residents to get to know each other.
- *Access to parks is a major existing issue.*
- There are too many restrictions in place in the City's parks (i.e. dogs, etc.).
- Increase community stewardship in parks.
- Increase collaboration between City, local/neighborhood groups, and merchant organizations.
- Employ common sense approaches to city planning.
- Prioritize creating more open spaces.
- Require developers to adhere to planning requirements and the local neighborhood's vision.
- Create networks of *interconnected* green spaces.
- Utilize alleys as public open spaces (i.e. Balmy Alley).

Priorities – Neighborhood

1. Acquire new open space in neighborhoods with a deficit
2. General maintenance
2. Safety
3. More amenities & activities to serve the needs of the community
4. Develop existing public right-of-ways into linear parks
5. Develop open space for food production

Priorities – Citywide

1. Acquire new open space for recreational facilities
2. General Maintenance
3. More amenities & activities to serve the needs of the community
4. Develop publicly-owned land along the waterfront into open space
5. Safety

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, 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 thanked Erick Arguello of the Lower 24th St. Merchant & Neighborhood Association for his help in organizing and setting up the workshop.