



Mayor's Task Force on Open Space

Meeting #4

Minutes

March 8, 2008

3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Pier One, Port of San Francisco

3:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Setting the Tone: Brief Presentation

Astrid Hayarti, Mayor's Office of Greening

Director Hayarti welcomed Task Force members, provided Task Force updates, and reviewed the day's agenda. Work groups continue to meet to work towards the goal of establishing an open space policy road map for implementation. The next Open Space Task Force meeting will take place on July 10, and will address the topics of wetlands and natural areas as habitat protection and experiences; downtown districts as centers for economic and cultural diversity; and greenways and green streets as connectors.

Director Hayarti reviewed the proposed definition of open space and guiding principles, and encouraged participants to utilize each draft document as a baseline to inform future discussion. She also reviewed a definition of high-performance open space, to help guide Task Force consideration of both quantity and quality, and a timeline of remaining work, noting how the results of the Open Space Task Force will be utilized to inform the San Francisco General Plan (ROSE). After a brief introduction, the following Break Out session topics were reviewed:

Urban Barriers as Places of Integration

Alfredo Pedroza, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services

Mr. Pedroza reviewed how the spaces around hills, freeways and other urban barriers can be utilized to help create connections to neighborhoods. These spaces should be seen urban oasis's that can augment our open space system, but do not in themselves replace the need for acquiring more open space.

The Urban Open Space Experience in Dense Neighborhoods

Cathie Lam, Chinatown CDC

Ms. Lam discussed the importance of alleyways in dense neighborhoods like Chinatown, which is the second densest neighborhood in the U.S. next to Manhattan. She reviewed the importance of looking closely at these types of spaces in Task Force discussions to ensure that every available inch is activated to encourage play, commerce, and social activity.

Appropriate Characteristics and Types of SF Waterfront Parks

Dan Hodapp, SF Port

Mr. Hodapp reviewed how the policies of continuity, sequence, and variety, established in the Port's past Waterfront land use plan, help shape future Task Force considerations. He discussed examples of successful projects such as Pier 7 and

Rincon Park, which pair development and open space and support the Port's mission as state trust lands to be a self-supporting enterprise agency dedicated to community planning. Specific questions for consideration include what a successful park system will look like, what program use contributes best to the city's needs, consistent with the Port's public trust doctrine, and how to create connections from Port and waterfront projects back to the city.

Appropriate and Dynamic Programming for SF

Chris Boettcher, Randall Museum

Mr. Boettcher discussed the high demand for dynamic nature-based programming, such as summer camps for children, within the city. He reviewed how spaces can be opened to serve various audiences over the day, from preschoolers in the morning to adults and children after school, and the value of considering how open space can be programmed to best meet diverse needs. Key questions to consider include what best-suited programming will make the best use of open space based on public demand and what infrastructure is required to achieve programming goals.

Funding Mechanisms: Issues to Consider

Neil Trama, Fillmore Jazz CBD and Isabel Wade, Neighborhood Parks Council

Mr. Trama discussed how funding mechanisms such as Community Benefit Districts, which qualify as non-profit organizations, can help generate diverse revenue streams from property taxes, city grants, and corporate sponsorships. Ms. Wade reviewed the importance of developing a funding package that's appropriate for San Francisco, to address the city's unique capital project needs as well as ongoing maintenance expenses.

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Imagine the Future: Visioning Session

Participants divided in to groups to address each Break Out topic. For more detailed information about the discussions of the individual break out group, [click here](#).

4:30 – 5:00 p.m.

Summary: Collective Thoughts

Each Break Out group reported back the following summaries of their collective thoughts and discussion highlights:

URBAN BARRIERS, presented by William Bulckley, Department of Public Works:

There are many types of barriers to citizen safety and access to public open spaces. These barriers can be real (e.g. highways) or perceived (e.g. fear of "dangerous" neighborhoods).

Several types of barriers exist in the southeastern section of San Francisco, where access, quality, and quantity of open space is already limited. This workgroup focused on urban barriers as places of integration in the southeastern neighborhoods surrounding the 101 and 280 freeways and heavily trafficked streets such as Cesar Chavez and Potrero.

Remedies include removing barriers and introducing new open space amenities (e.g. burying highways), working around barriers to activate their formerly undesirable areas (e.g. skateparks and mountain bike parks), and better activating and programming current open spaces (e.g. farmers markets). Remedies address access and safety barriers, but also public health (e.g. exercise steps), climate protection (e.g. windmills), art (e.g. artistic lighting), and education (e.g. interpretive centers).

DENSE NEIGHBORHOODS, presented by Josh Switzky, Department of Planning:

The Dense Neighborhoods group was asked to answer the following questions: How do we enhance the urban open space experience in dense neighborhoods? How do we (1) create and (2) activate these kinds of space? To ‘create’ the experience, participants noted the importance about thinking creatively about the use of spaces, such as alleyways. Including temporal uses (ie. street closures) into the open space network, especially in the downtown area on weekends, was another recommendation from the group. To “activate” the spaces, participants recommended that both the design and the social context should be taken into account. The social problems in the Tenderloin were highlighted in this conversation.

Also, a map of all the open space should be posted in the downtown neighborhoods. With regards to privately-owned public spaces, it was suggested that the city modify policies to allow for better utilization of those spaces in the non-work hours. To create a network of experiences, the group identified the importance of green streets and a safe and friendly pedestrian realm to link existing open spaces.

WATERFRONT, presented by Marcel Wilson, Landscape Architect:

Connectivity between open spaces and neighborhoods constitutes a significant issue for the waterfront. Without safe and active connections, waterfront open space is much less likely to be utilized. Planning waterfront open space should also incorporate planning pedestrian and transit connections, in order to encourage both visitors and local residents to use and enjoy the space. Creating unique features or destination points can also greatly enhance the neighborhood, street, and open space environments.

Overcoming barriers to waterfront open space was another major topic of discussion. Three large barriers that were identified were: fast-moving traffic; lack of safe, clear connections; and lack of activated, “useful” spaces. Many solutions were proposed, including the following: recreation loops through and around the city; improved bicycle infrastructure; reassignment of public properties; creating diverse, unique programming for open spaces; and human scale planning for open spaces and their neighborhood connections.

PROGRAMMING, presented by Catherine Rauschuber, Recreation and Planning Department:

The Programming group started their discussion by creating a definition for programming, which is the following: *any structured activity that activates the space (formal or informal, alone or in a group)*. The group then identified high priority programming needs for San Francisco – by answering the following 4 questions: who, where, when, and how? **WHO** – more programming for children and families. **WHERE** – Southeastern Neighborhoods. **WHEN?** On the weekends. **HOW?** Better marketing of existing programs. Finally, the programming group identified five key strategies for moving forward: (1) commitment by the city to engage in more community partnerships and build relationships; (2) modify

policies to make it easier to work with the city; (3) more resources for actual programs; and (4) investment in infrastructure.

FINANCE, presented by Kearstin Krehbiel, Parks Trust:

The finance workgroup discussed the importance of developing a funding package appropriate for San Francisco and to address the city's unique capital project needs as well as ongoing maintenance expenses. The group identified four new revenue streams for maintenance: (1) Park Improvement Districts; (2) Community Benefit Districts; (3) Open Space Fund – for acquisition; and (4) Regional collaboration (regional park districts, etc). The group also identified key barriers that need to be addressed: (1) politics; (2) timing, and (3) restrictions on volunteers in the parks.

Finally, Director Hayarti thanked participants for their contributions, which are critical to the Task Force as it moves forward towards its end goal. She reviewed how all inputs, and any others that may come up before the next meeting, will be posted to the new Open Space Task Force website at www.openspacesf.org beginning May 16th.

Announcements:

The next Open Space Task Force meeting will be held on July 10th, location and time TBD. Workgroups will continue to meet the week of May 19th, 2008.

May 31st, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., the **Clean and Green Summit** will take place at Cesar Chavez Elementary School. Discussion topics include neighborhood greening strategies and community challenge grant requirements. Space is limited. Register online at www.empowersf.org.

June 21st and 22nd, 9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., **The Big One**, community convergence for conscious change, will take place at Sharon Meadow in Golden Gate Park. For more information visit www.beautifulcommunities.org.