



## **Portola/Bernal Heights**

**March 5, 2009 ~ 6-8 pm ~ Palega Rec. Center**

***Hosted by: Goettingen Neighbors Group & Help McLaren Park***

*Approximate number of attendees: 10*

## **AGENDA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- *Isabel Wade, Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC)*
- *Laura Kemp, Goettingen Neighbors Group*
- *Trilce Farrugia, Help McLaren Park*

Opening up the workshop, Isabel Wade of the Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) greeted the participants and thanked Laura Kemp of the Goettingen Neighbors Group and Trilce Farrugia of Help McLaren Park for their help in sponsoring the workshop. Isabel also recognized Jeanne Alexander in the group who writes the park history articles for NPC.

Isabel then turned over the floor to Laura Kemp to make a few announcements on behalf of the Goettingen Neighbors Group. Laura mentioned that the Goettingen Neighbors Group had created a community garden and were now working to keep it free of litter and graffiti during their monthly workdays. She also mentioned that flyers were available for their upcoming 2<sup>nd</sup> annual plant sale, and that they will be having a block party in July.

Trilce Farrugia of Help McLaren Park then made a few announcements regarding her organization, specifically mentioning the effort to obtain grants for the removal and replacement of contaminated sand in McLaren Park. She also noted that flyers were available for more information about the group's efforts.

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

- *Isabel Wade, NPC*

Next, Isabel reviewed the purpose of having a discussion about Open Space. She noted that while there is an abundance of parks in San Francisco, they are not evenly spread throughout the City. Therefore, she emphasized 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, Isabel underscored the fact again that while some parts of the City have sufficient amounts of public open space and well-maintained facilities, others are severely lacking and overall, maintenance is a challenge in any neighborhood.

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**

- *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 the completion of Sue's presentation, Isabel Wade noted that the Palega Playground and Rec. Center were on the bond list for improvements.

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

- *Matt Silva, Host*

Following the Policy Framework presentation, Host Matt Silva 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, Matt 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**

- *Matt Silva, 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

- *Open space* with lots of grass *is preferred*.
- Prioritize social justice & equity in allocating funds and resources for open spaces throughout the City.
- Consider increasing property tax in order to generate revenue *for park improvements*.
- The City needs to focus more *on providing adequate services* to the working class neighborhoods.
- Prioritize providing more green space – this leads to more people using parks and inevitably more safety.
- Connect existing open spaces *with green corridors in order to* encourage use.
- Rent out the Jerry Garcia Amphitheater in McLaren Park to create revenue and draw people to the underutilized park.
- Install permeable landscape and treatments on *neighborhood* streets.
- The current lack of City leadership on open space is a major issue.

Priorities – Neighborhood

1. General maintenance
2. Renovations to existing parks
2. More amenities & activities to serve the needs of the community
3. Safety
4. Better access to parks (ped., bike, transit)
4. Secure open space with high quality natural features

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

- Safety
- General maintenance
- Acquire new open space in neighborhoods with a deficit
- Develop existing public right-of-ways into linear parks

### Table 2

#### Major concepts from discussion

- *Focus on* educating the public about the value and *importance* of open space.
- Encourage *and enable* volunteerism.
- Consider closing Goettingen St. to cars between the schools (*Burton Academic High School & Taylor Elementary?*) and develop it into a green space.
- McLaren is underutilized – the result of a lack of safety and deficiency of programming variety.

### Priorities – Neighborhood

1. Safety
2. More amenities & activities to serve the needs of the community
3. General maintenance
4. Other: educate the public about the concept & value of open space
5. Develop existing public right-of-ways into linear parks

### Priorities – Citywide

1. Safety
2. Renovations to existing parks
3. Open schoolyards for public access
4. Other: educate the public about the concept & value of open space
5. General maintenance

## **NEXT STEPS & CLOSING**

- *Isabel Wade, NPC*

### Staying Involved

Isabel Wade from the Neighborhood Parks Council noted that there was a real shortage of playgrounds in the surrounding neighborhood and no system currently existed for acting on these types of needs. Accordingly, she 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 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; 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 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.

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](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. Isabel 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

Isabel Wade 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 Laura Kemp of the Goettingen Neighbors Group and Trilce Farrugia of Help McLaren Park for their help in organizing the workshop. In addition, Isabel also expressed thanks to Sue Exline of the Planning Department for attending.