



# Meeting the Open Space Challenges of the Future *COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SERIES*

## **Richmond/Presidio Heights**

**March 31, 2009 ~ 6-8 pm ~ Richmond Recreation Center**

***Hosted by: Boulevard Neighbors User Group (BNUG)***

*Approximate number of attendees: 15*

## **AGENDA**

### **INTRODUCTION**

*- Kelly Quirke, Host*

Opening up the workshop, Kelly Quirke greeted the workshop participants and thanked them for coming. He then briefly summarized the purpose of the workshop, indicating that this outreach process was part of a series of nearly 30 meetings around the City representing the second phase of the Mayor's Open Space Task Force. The goal of this more than year-long process is to develop both immediate action steps needed to secure the future of open space in San Francisco as well as generate ideas for a long-term vision. In addition, City Planning is gathering information from community members for the City's update of the Open Space Element of the General Plan, ROSE, which will provide the policy framework for open space decision in the future.

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

*- Isabel Wade, Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC)*

Next, Isabel Wade of the Neighborhood Parks Council proceeded to explain the importance of having a discussion about Open Space. She noted that while the Richmond & Presidio Heights areas may have a lot of open space available, this is not necessarily the case in many other parts of the City. In addition, she mentioned that in many neighborhoods, including the Richmond and Presidio Heights, the recreational needs of the community might not be met.

After this brief overview, Isabel informed the group that the Neighborhood Parks Council has been working in partnership with the Recreation & Parks Department and Planning Department

to address the challenges of Open Space in San Francisco through the Mayor's Open Space Task Force, launched in 2007. She discussed the importance of getting the public's ranking of priorities about open space issues in order to develop a meaningful Action Plan.

### **POLICY FRAMEWORK: ROSE**

- *Isabel Wade, NPC*

Isabel Wade then gave a brief presentation about the City Planning Department's revision of the Recreation & Open Space Element (ROSE) of the City's General Plan. The newest version aims to have actionable and specific implementation steps linked to each policy that are universal across agencies. Isabel noted the significance of this because the City does need to be more specific about where new parks will actually be located, especially in light of the fact that some neighborhoods are seriously underserved. The three outcomes or products of the current effort were restated, with particular emphasis being placed on the establishment of the 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. Isabel summarized the 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/>).

### **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 in helping to shape the nature of the City's parks. 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

- Utilize information, communication, and transportation in order to take fullest advantage of existing open space/resources.
- Emphasize access in order to create equity of parks/open space – i.e. employ transit opportunities between & within major parks, and use creative advertising/signage about parks on existing transit routes.
- Embrace the concept of community/urban gardening as a whole (beyond just creating new garden plots) – promotes community building; also, if incorporated into school curriculum it can teach the value of open space/nature at a young age.
- Prioritize the empowerment of volunteers – both in official capacity (city programs) and on an individual level (i.e. tool lending, etc.).

Priorities – Neighborhood (*specific order not stated*)

- General maintenance
- Better access to parks (ped., bike, transit)
- Open schoolyards for public access
- Develop open space for food production

Priorities – Citywide (*specific order not stated*)

- Better access to parks (ped., bike, transit)
- Acquire new open space in neighborhoods with a deficit
- Develop publicly-owned land along the waterfront into open space
- Develop open space for food production
- Other: determine how to best utilize existing space – both inside & outside City limits

#### Table 2

Major concepts from discussion

- Fix City politics so that there is more access to diverse green/open spaces (goes for school district lands too) owned by different city departments
- *Place* a set-aside for parks on the 2010 ballot.
- City needs a philosophy that is welcoming to volunteers – stop making it difficult for people to help.
- The Mayor should try to attend park work days and other events to thank regular parks volunteers – these people need to be encouraged.
- City should match volunteer hours with funding rather than punish groups by taking funds away from parks that have active community involvement.

### Priorities – Neighborhood

1. Renovations to existing parks
2. General maintenance and safety – tied together
3. Acquire new open space for recreational facilities
4. Open schoolyards for public access
5. Develop existing public right-of-ways into linear parks

### Priorities – Citywide

1. Renovations to existing parks
2. General maintenance
3. Acquire new open space in neighborhoods with a deficit
3. Develop publicly-owned land along the waterfront into open space
4. Open schoolyards for public access
5. Increase open space for sports fields

### Table 3

#### Major concepts from discussion

- Holistically analyze all of the agencies involved with open space in SF (i.e. RPD, GGNRA, DPW, PUC, etc.) in order to take advantage of existing resources – people, land, and facilities.
- Create a walking network through the City – provide educational outreach to *highlight* pedestrian linkages, include capital improvements in this effort as well.
- Develop vegetation management plans
- Prioritize maintenance – be more inclusive of volunteers and cut the red tape.
- *Develop funding mechanisms that utilize private/public partnerships.*

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

- Renovations to existing parks
- General maintenance
- Safety
- Better access to parks
- Open schoolyards for public access (have these new spaces be prioritized for sports use)

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

- Renovations to existing parks
- General maintenance
- Develop publicly-owned land along the waterfront into open space
- Open schoolyards for public access
- Acquire new open space for recreational facilities – especially in neighborhoods with a deficit

## **NEXT STEPS & CLOSING**

### 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.

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

### 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.

