



Sunset District

February 9, 2009 ~ 6:30-8 pm ~ AP Giannini Middle School

Hosted by: Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center

AGENDA

Approximate number of attendees: 15

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

- Meredith Thomas, Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC)

Opening up the meeting, Meredith Thomas of the Neighborhood Parks Council greeted the workshop participants and 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

Next, Sue Exline of the San Francisco Planning Department 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 During her presentation, Sue noted that the reason for initiating the update is that the current version is out of date and consequently lacks the status it should have as a strong, guiding policy document for the City.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.

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. 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 ten 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

- The programming of open space is an important *factor*, a good balance is needed between activities and quiet space – a variety of activities *is key*.
- Focus on keeping and maintaining the green spaces that the neighborhood has now.
- Mobilize volunteers and *utilize* community support to improve park maintenance.

- *Strive to create green spaces in public right-of-ways – emphasizing programming to connect spaces, and recreation opportunities between established spaces.*

Priorities – Neighborhood

1. Acquire open space with high quality natural features
2. More recreational opportunities
3. Open up schoolyards in park-deficient neighborhoods
4. Acquire open space for linear parks along greenways
5. Increase urban food production

Priorities – Citywide

No specific Citywide priorities listed

Table 2

Major concepts from discussion

- Increase shared usage *opportunities* – high performing parks have shared activity *areas*.
- Expand car-free street closure programs in parks. In Golden Gate Park, move the street closure locations to different areas of the park *in order to* encourage the community to utilize different areas or even different parks.
- *Create* more areas that are specific to certain activities – i.e. create spaces for bikes and skateboards so there is room for people to do these types of activities.
- *Need* more Richmond street greening.
- Improving Maintenance *is vital – this addresses* a perceived lack of safety because of broken glass, homeless encampments, dog poop, etc. *The key is to* make the surrounding area pleasant, which can also be done through the greening of sidewalks by adding street trees, and traffic calming.

Priorities – Neighborhood

No specific Neighborhood priorities listed

Priorities – Citywide

No specific Citywide priorities listed

Table 3

Major concepts from discussion

- The neighborhood has a lot of larger parks and open spaces, but lacks the staff and money to maintain them – ensuring adequate staffing of *facilities is a major priority*. Street trees are an important aspect in improving a neighborhood's quality and this should be a focus in the Sunset. Ways to promote this include installing and planting bulb-outs and under grounding existing utilities.
- Create more linear green spaces *to connect existing parks* – start by adding planted medians to wide streets.
- *The neighborhood* could use plazas or other meeting spaces where people can gather.
- Consider implementing Assessment Districts – although it would have to be ensured that the City keeps up its work/funding in those areas too.

Priorities – Neighborhood (*specific order not stated*)

- Improved general maintenance
- Acquire open space for linear parks and along greenways
- Renovations to existing parks
- More recreational opportunities

Priorities – Citywide (*specific order not stated*)

- Improved general maintenance
- Renovations to existing parks
- Acquire open space with high quality natural features
- Open up schoolyards in park-deficient neighborhoods

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 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 finish and turn in the individual Feedback Forms that had been distributed at the beginning of the meeting, or to visit the Open Space 2100 website and take the online survey. Available at www.openspacesf.org/survey, the feedback form collects individual priorities and values regarding open space in San Francisco, and is a very valuable source of information for the aforementioned plans.

Closing Remarks

Meredith Thomas and the Neighborhood Parks Council staff thanked the workshop participants for coming and reminded them that they would be able to access these meeting notes on the Open Space 2100 website.