



Western Addition/Fillmore

March 11, 2009 ~ 6-8 pm ~ Western Addition Branch Library

Hosted by: Friends of Kimball Park

Approximate number of attendees: 7

AGENDA

INTRODUCTION

- Isabel Wade, Neighborhood Parks Council

Opening up the workshop, Isabel Wade of the Neighborhood Parks Council greeted the participants and thanked them for attending the community workshop.

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. She also mentioned that the Neighborhood Parks Council is looking for projects to take on related to parks and open space, and that the participant's ideas and input about their neighborhood were extremely valuable. 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. The current draft and policies are available for review on the City's website (<http://openspace.sfplanning.org/>).

Following Sue's presentation, a question was asked about the proper time to provide comments on the ROSE draft. In response, Sue stated that the current workshop series was the precisely the opportunity to do so, and that any comments collected during the public outreach phase would be considered within the second draft of the ROSE, which is expected to be finished in May 2009.

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.

Before continuing onto the group exercise, a few additional questions were asked by participants. The first was in regards to artificial turf, which is currently planned to be installed at Kimbell Park. In response, Isabel Wade mentioned that it is a valid question and that Patrick Hannon from the Cityfields Foundation was at the workshop, and would be happy to discuss the issue outside of the workshop.

The second question was in regards to how “open space” was actually being defined. To this Isabel Wade responded that it was an important question which has already garnered considerable thought, and that in the interest of flexibility the participants should consider as wide a variety of options as possible.

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

- Target renovation efforts in a way that *accurately reflects the needs established by the City's demographics*.
- *It is important to remember that parks should provide an opportunity for kids to play and “get dirty”.*
- Consider using college students, especially in the summer, at RPD facilities to supplement RPD staff including outside in the playgrounds and fields.
- Two major things are essential *to the success of open space* – fiscal accountability and robust public/private partnerships.

Priorities – Neighborhood

1. General maintenance
2. Renovations to existing parks
3. Other: fiscal accountability
4. Other: public/private partnerships
5. Open schoolyards for public access

Priorities – Citywide

1. General maintenance
2. Renovations to existing parks
3. Other: fiscal accountability
4. Other: public/private partnerships
5. Develop publicly-owned land along the waterfront into open space; try for a beach in the south east!

Table 2

Major concepts from discussion

- Maintenance of existing parks/facilities should be prioritized over creating new open spaces.
- Focus on increasing volunteerism – aside from getting general help, examine creative sources of specialized volunteer assistance (i.e. landscape design students at local universities, increased usage of high school students to foster long term stewardship.
- Safety in parks is a major priority.
- Renovations go hand in hand with amenities – if facilities are maintained well, there will be more money available to provide additional programming.

Priorities – Neighborhood

1. General maintenance
2. Renovations to existing parks
2. More amenities & activities to serve the needs of the community
3. Safety

Priorities – Citywide

1. Safety
2. Renovations to existing parks
2. More amenities & activities to serve the needs of the community
3. Better access to parks (ped., bike, transit)
4. Develop existing public right-of-ways into linear parks
5. Open schoolyards for public access

NEXT STEPS & CLOSING

- *Isabel Wade, NPC*

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 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. In summarizing this point, she highlighted the fact that due to Rec. & Park Department staff cuts, 10 community recreation centers were being made available to be leased by non-profit organizations. An RFP will be issued for those interested.

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, 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..

Closing Remarks

Before closing the workshop, Isabel Wade mentioned that the Neighborhood Parks Council was having its monthly coalition meeting the following evening (3/12/09) from 6-8pm at 451 Hayes St., and that all were invited to come and share their thoughts and ideas. The topics would include the opportunities for community programming in the 10 recreation centers that will be leased out, as well as an update on the Urban Forestry portion of the 2008 bond by RPD staff. She also let the participants know that NPC was working on a November ballot measure that would press the City to encourage volunteerism for any non health or safety related public services.

At this time, Matt Silva of NPC made an announcement that the Friends of Kimbell Park group was having its monthly clean-up day on Saturday, March 14 from 9 am to noon, and that all were encouraged to come and support the park.

Finally, Isabel 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 Sue Exline of the Planning Department for attending.