



## **Mayor's Task Force on Open Space Meeting #2**

### **Minutes**

January 31, 2008

8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

South Light Court, City Hall, San Francisco

#### **8:30 a.m.**

##### **Mayor Newsom's Welcome Remarks**

Mayor Newsom welcomed participants and expressed his appreciation for each Task Force member's commitment and hard work in helping craft an Open Space Action Plan that may inform policy and planning. Mayor Newsom noted the need to work collaboratively to leverage resources and establish innovative public/private partnerships. He stressed the importance of building on the momentum of progress made by the Recreation and Parks Department and taking advantage of open space opportunities presented on Treasure Island, in Mission Bay and through new ideas that the Port will announce shortly. Mayor Newsom noted that good ideas generated from the work of the Task Force will be advanced within the budget process, with the support of Supervisors, in spite of the \$800 million dollar deficit.

#### **8:45 a.m.**

##### **Lessons from Seattle**

##### **John Rahaim, Director of City Planning, San Francisco**

Director Rahaim discussed lessons, challenges and opportunities learned from Seattle's open space community planning efforts. The main two keys to Seattle's success were the use of innovative partnerships and a broad definition of open space. In Seattle's experience, open space is the result of collaboration and partnership. Planning requires working outside of just the parks department to address physical barriers, such as highways, and to ensure that open space issues are addressed from a broad perspective. Seattle struggled to acquire new land within the city and therefore had to think differently about the definition of open space. Therefore in Seattle, open space is defined as all space in the public realm (e.g. space in between buildings, public rights of way, waterfronts, etc.) which represents 35% of the city's land. An important lesson learned was the importance of including the community in open space planning efforts and thinking about open space as a system. The community helped inform a city vision for growth from a 2,000 foot perspective, and how to manage growth to ensure maximum public benefit. This thinking eventually evolved into an emphasis on planning and creating more sustainable city infrastructure overall. The Seattle public utilities entity funded a position to address the long-term maintenance and sustainability issues of city infrastructure.

#### **9:00 a.m.**

##### **The State of Open Space in San Francisco**

##### **An Overview of Existing Open Space in San Francisco: Inventory, Gaps and Challenges**

Dawn Kamalanathan, of the Recreation and Parks Department (RPD), reviewed all 3,370 acres of open space owned by RPD within the City and County of San Francisco, identifying gaps in the East and along the waterfront. The city is working to acquire new land, but budget constraints raise the need for innovative ideas and partnerships. RPD maintenance and capital challenges and opportunities include issues of staffing (needs are higher than resources available); interagency collaboration (must identify lines of responsibility and mechanisms for sustainability); stewardship; prioritization; resources (limited availability which requires development of a capital funding tool kit to maintain current and finance future open space).

Suzanne Gautier, of the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), reviewed open space owned by PUC, including reservoirs and lakes and other natural choices for potential trails, picnic areas and programmed open space. PUC generates revenues from utility rates, grants, bonds and other mechanisms and has Commissioner support for grants through the Lake Merced Task Force. Opportunities and challenges include 12.25 acres of zoned open space at O'Shaughnessy Blvd; 41.99 acres at Laguna Honda (must address issues of safety and the area's steep slope and sensitive habitat); and 618.82 acres (including the water) at Lake Merced. RPD is in the process of transferring management responsibility for Lake Merced to PUC as watershed land.

Kelley Kahn, of the Redevelopment Agency, reviewed the 3,000 acres of redevelopment open space areas. To date, 78 acres have been developed, with 492 acres in the pipeline (including 300 acres on Treasure Island and most of the rest on the city's South East). Developed open spaces held by the Redevelopment Agency include Yerba Buena Gardens and Mission Bay, which used financing mechanisms such as developer payments, tax incentives and community facilities district designation to finance development, and tenant lease term revenues, property owner taxes and development agreement clauses to fund ongoing maintenance expenses. Opportunities and challenges include interaction with other city departments regarding maintenance, programming, and mapping with GIS, and funding to address existing gaps and create a continuous Bay Trail. A key lesson learned has been the importance of identifying funding mechanisms for maintenance before open space is built.

Liz Lerma, of the Department of Public Works (DPW), reviewed the 560 acres of open space represented by "unaccepted" streets – streets and public rights of way such as stairways and freeway berms that are not built to city standard and therefore not accepted for city maintenance. The Street Park Program began in 2004, and depends on a partnership with the Public Lands Trust. DPW offers technical advice, permits, street vacations, clean-up help, and other assistance to community members interested in maintaining unaccepted streets as gardens and open space areas. The Parks Trust holds the permit for the program and works with DPW to partner in parks, provide outreach grants and cover liability. The Street Park Program represents a model for community stewardship and an opportunity for connecting greenways together, but faces challenges in financing streetscape improvement projects.

Daniel Hodapp, of the Port of San Francisco, reviewed the seven and a half miles of open space owned by the State, and overseen by the Port as a trustee for public trust lands. The Port's mission is to take care of maintenance responsibilities, protect natural resources (including historic buildings), and provide opportunities to attract public use to the water front. The Port's decade-old land-use plan sets a vision for that includes continuity (ability to walk the entire property), sequence (a significant public space every 5-7 minutes of walking), and variety (each public space is different). Examples of successful projects include the Embarcadero, which connects major city streets and is funded and supported by commercial

development, and Rincon Park, which resulted from collaboration between the Port and the Redevelopment Agency.

**9:40 a.m.**

**Overview of the Recreation and Open Space Element of the General Plan (ROSE)**

**City Planning**

Sue Exline provided an overview of the ROSE, which was written in 1980 to serve as a planning guide. Essentially the ROSE is a series of plans for the shoreline, neighborhoods, downtown, etc., which set standards for acquiring parks and establishes strong language on retention of open space. The ROSE also includes master plans for specific spaces (e.g. Golden Gate Park), sets funding standards, and calls for development of public realms within specific areas, such as areas of high density. Examples of successful parks and open spaces that resulted from the ROSE include the Embarcadero, Chrissy Field, and the Presidio. Challenges and opportunities that arise from the ROSE include how to make the most of what we have; taking advantage of our school yards; increasing parks in dense areas; environmental justice and equitability; how to engage ownership and stewardship; rethinking maintenance and sustainability; acquisition and funding strategies; rethinking the definition of open space; and the sustainability and health of the materials used in open space projects.

**9:50 a.m.**

**Question and Answer Time**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Task Force Discussion: What is the Definition of Urban Open Space?**

**Facilitated by Gabriel Metcalf, Executive Director of SPUR**

**10:25 a.m.**

**Closing Remarks and Next Steps**

**Mike Farrah, Chair and Director of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services**

Director Farrah reiterated the goal of the Task Force to design a set of recommendations to help guide city decision making, and outlined the Task Force's next steps. The Executive Committee will meet to review the results and feedback from today's session and plan for the next Task Force meeting scheduled to take place on March 13 at the Bayview Opera House. The next Task Force meeting will address acquisition strategies. Director Farrah encouraged participants to forward to Karin Edwards or to him any additions to or suggestions they may have for the next meeting. He welcomed all volunteers interested in helping to staff the Task Force and keep it track and moving forward.