Pacific Heights
February 26, 2009 ~ 6:30-8:30 pm ~ Calvary Presbyterian Church Educational Center
Hosted by: Pacific Heights Residents Association

Approximate number of attendees: 12

AGENDA

INTRODUCTION
- Judith Duffy, Pacific Heights Residents Association (PHRA)

Opening up the workshop, Judith Duffy of the Pacific Heights Residents Association (PHRA) greeted the participants and asked a few of their board members to stand up and introduce themselves.

At this time, Judith had Art Persyk of the Friends of Lafayette Park park group stand up and make a brief announcement. Art mentioned that both the Friends of Lafayette Park and Friends of Alta Plaza Park groups have park workdays typically occurring on the first Saturday of every month. During these workdays, volunteers help to pick-up trash, plant flowers, and take care of just about any other type of simple maintenance task the park requires. The next events will be taking place on March 7th for the Friends of Lafayette Park, and on April 11th for the Friends of Alta Plaza Park. For more information, contact kim@kimbarnes.net for Friends of Lafayette Park or altaplazaclean_up@yahoo.com for Friends of Alta Plaza Park.

WELCOME & OVERVIEW OF OPEN SPACE IN SAN FRANCISCO: Why it Matters
- Meredith Thomas, Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC)

Following the introduction, Meredith Thomas of the Neighborhood Parks Council greeted the participants and expressed her gratitude to Judith Duffy and the Pacific Heights Residents Association for their help in sponsoring the workshop.
Next, Meredith 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.

Meredith also touched upon 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, Meredith addressed the fact that while some parts of the City have sufficient amounts of public open space, others are severely lacking. She brought up the Blue Greenway, a citywide Neighborhood Parks Council program that would serve areas of the City that desperately need more open space.

POLICY FRAMEWORK: ROSE
- Sarah Dennis Phillips, S.F. Planning Department

Sarah Dennis Phillips 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, Sarah 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. In addition to community input on the ROSE effort, Sarah also mentioned the importance of community involvement in the City’s parks, specifically referring to the Friends of Lafayette Park and Friends of Alta Plaza Park groups as great examples of this. 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 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
- 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
- Enable more access to community gardens by creating more of them – one source of land would be to utilize a small portion of the City’s golf courses.
- Better maintenance is needed – improve this through better interaction between Park & Rec. Dept. staff and community members.
- Focus on improving streetscapes so that they become linear greenways.
- Improve/increase programming in parks – especially those occurring in the evenings as a way to enhance safety.
- Make better lighting & lighting design a priority.
- The City needs to work with developers to ensure they include open space in their projects.
- Develop better connections between city departments and the public – enables tool lending for maintenance, etc.

Priorities – Neighborhood
1. Develop existing public right-of-ways into linear parks
2. Develop open space for food production
3. Renovations to existing parks
4. More amenities & activities to serve the needs of the community
5. Acquire new open space in neighborhoods with a deficit

- General Maintenance and Safety should be a given, and therefore are not something to be decided on as a priority.
Priorities – Citywide
1. Develop existing public right-of-ways into linear parks
2. Develop open space for food production
3. Renovations to existing parks
4. More amenities & activities to serve the needs of the community
5. Acquire new open space in neighborhoods with a deficit

Table 2
Major concepts from discussion
• Develop a system of linear bike paths/green corridors that connect open spaces throughout the City – these should always take elevation changes into consideration.
• Develop a website or service that allows people to search out parks depending on various activities or programs (i.e. search for “basketball” and site lists court locations) – this can be modeled similarly to NPC’s Park Scan.
• Establish a vacant lot ordinance that enables the public to make temporary use of undeveloped spaces.
• Consider redistricting the City in a way that categorizes it as a series of ecosystems – this would help create mechanisms for the allocation of future green spaces over time, and help promote the development of more space for local food production (community gardens).

Priorities – Neighborhood (specific order not stated)
• Better access to parks to parks (ped., bike, transit)
• Acquire new open space in neighborhoods with a deficit
• Open schoolyards for public access
• Develop open space for food production
• Acquire new open space for recreational facilities

Priorities – Citywide
1. Develop open space for food production
2. Develop publicly-owned land along the waterfront into open space
2. Develop existing public right-of-ways into linear parks
3. Better access to parks (ped., bike, transit)
3. Open schoolyards for public access
3. Secure open space with high quality natural features

NEXT STEPS & CLOSING
- Meredith Thomas, Neighborhood Parks Council (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 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; and the 2008 Neighborhood Parks Bond, which includes a $5 million Community Opportunity Fund for neighborhood parks projects. Meredith 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 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. Meredith also noted that participants would be able to access these meeting notes on the Open Space 2100 website.

Closing Remarks
Meredith Thomas 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 Judith Duffy and the Pacific Heights Residents Association for their help in organizing the workshop. In addition, Meredith also expressed thanks to Sarah Dennis Phillips Planning Department for attending.