



NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS COUNCIL

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COALITION MEETING MINUTES

THE FUTURE OF OPEN SPACE IN SAN FRANCISCO

October 15, 2008 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

State Building, 455 Golden Gate Avenue, San Diego Room

I. Welcome & Introductions

Isabel Wade, NPC Executive Director

NPC Staff, Guest Speakers

II. NPC Program Updates

Stewardship Program & Park Maintenance (*Meredith Thomas*)

Advocacy, Outreach (*Matt Silva*)

III. Re-Envisioning our Urban Parks

Urban Parks Panel: Arden Bucklin (SFUSD); Susan King (Sunday Streets); Maya Donelson (Graze the Roof); Tom Arie-Donch (Interplay Design)

▪ Arden Bucklin

- Working with SFUSD and Green Schoolyard Alliance
- Started with question: how did we end up with so much asphalt?
 - Asphalt is easy to maintain
 - Important because budget cuts cause staffing reductions
 - Used to have maintenance staff of 72, now have 14
 - One teacher can supervise many kids
- Tule Elk Park Child Development Center was one of the first to green their schoolyard
 - Raised 400k—redesigned yard with oak trees, lawn areas, vegetable gardens, etc.
- SF has perfect climate here for school gardens—Maritime climate with plantings and harvests during school year, also a history of school gardens, some already 25 years old
- Green Schoolyard Alliance connected existing gardens
- Lawsuit helped provide funding—school wasn't accessible, parents sued SFUSD and won
 - Resulted in bond to bring schools to ADA compliance with 7 million set aside for greening schoolyards: meant 45 schools could have 150k each
- Have learned that building green schoolyard is easy part, maintenance is harder
 - Tap into new group of captive parents each year
 - Help teachers incorporate school gardens into curriculum: use=sustainability
- Now about 30 school gardens all over City, unlike a park, allow kids to “muck around”
 - Also allows kids to care about and for something

- **Susan King**
 - From Walk SF (parent organization is Livable City)
 - Helped coordinate Sunday Streets in SF
 - Inspired by “Ciclovía” in Bogotá, Colombia
 - Government closed roads on Sunday mornings, 7 miles at first now 70 miles and over a million people come out each week
 - Also done in other major cities: Kiev, Mexico City, Portland (1st US city, 2008), New York City (2nd US city, 2008)
 - San Francisco (August 31 and September 14th): Hunters Point to Portsmouth Square in Chinatown included Bay View Opera House, and ball park
 - Goals: take open space to communities without Presidio or GG Park
 - Did not want the program to have impact on budget, raised 120k through corporate sponsorships and various donations
 - Most people who led activities were volunteering:
 - 50 activities over 7 activity hubs – tai chi and lion dancing, Chinese folk art, 1000 seniors walked from Chinatown with mayor to Ferry Building, Thriller Dance, Lacrosse, Bike n Roll – 100 free bike rentals, 30 bikes free for youth in Chinatown and Bay View, Yoga, Black Rock Roller Disco, Over 100 community partners (Bike Coalition was a big partner)
 - Logistically complicated– 72 parking control officers, 12 police officers, health and fire code, entertainment commission and sound permits, RPD
 - Over 10k people per weekend, feedback was: ended too early
 - Want to bring it to other parts of the city
- **Maya Donelson**
 - Started because she was interested in bringing open space and agriculture in urban environment
 - Important considerations: How much weight can go on roof - what is a good soil mixture that is lightweight – Gaya soil – cost inhibitor expensive
 - Got small grant from Clif Bar to fund 3 young people to make sustainable change in our community – seed money – 120 volunteers came out from Tenderloin
 - Not many people for guidance as not many rooftop gardens already in SF
 - Kids ages 5-18 were invited to see rooftop transform
 - Murals now on roof- 6 degrees of sustainability – 14 panels of educational murals which hopefully will be developed into a curriculum
 - Big challenge now: figuring out how to sustain it and steward it
- **Tom Arie-Donch**
 - Average skatepark takes 7 years from first desires to build and completion
 - This normal process is too expensive, prohibitive for green spaces/artistic things
 - You can't have 7 year process, it takes heart out of group, most community groups have to work in 1-year period, so have to put pressure on local government to work with community and change process/make quicker
 - At Alameda Skatepark – kept cost to 50 bucks per yard of concrete, built whole park for 100k in 10 days
 - Thrasher magazine said it was very successful
 - Lessons: government has to get out of the way, with not against
 - Creates sense of community that is important: local judge said that 72 years in Alameda he had never seen that type of mobilization

IV. Rethinking Urban Parks: Q&A

Moderated question and answer session with panelists, including coalition discussion

- I'm interested in schoolyards. What are the opportunities for sharing that green schoolyard space?
 - Truth is: whether or not officially open, people get into the schoolyards on nights/weekends
 - 4-5 schools are currently open—joint project of Mayors Office and SFUSD
 - It is a new concept—so far it has been fine, haven't had graffiti or damage
- I heard that people are getting a grant/award to bicycle from your employers, can you talk about that?
 - Program where you get \$20 a month to bike or write your fast pass off (\$45)
 - Walk SF does advocacy for walkers – has advocated to MTA to increase pedestrian staff
- What policies with new construction to make sure new buildings can accommodate these types of rooftop gardens?
 - Code needs to be changed to require new construction – right now you need two stairwells for accessibility, rooftop gardens would need to be considered maintenance
- What about LEED?
 - You can get a few points to implement rooftop garden
 - High rise buildings by code have to hold load, but you need to have two entrances, making entrances is cost prohibitive
 - Most roofs could hold weight but don't have two access ways
 - At Glide, the structure wasn't changed at all
- There is a building under construction at Polk and Market, put a garden on roof of garage
 - Wolf House @ 4th and mission has a fabulous rooftop garden that was built 20 years ago
 - Building replaced community garden for Filipino community, community wanted city to give them space, they went to building trades union and asked for space to garden, the union then hammered city and pressured them to include garden
- Chicago has 4 million sq. feet of green roofs so it is possible
 - Can disconnect downspouts to sewer line, 9 million gallons of rainwater in Civic Center alone, should be items in pro forma to encourage rooftop gardens that allow public access
- Pittsburgh universities are getting green roofs, we should encourage SF universities to do same
 - UCSF: regeneration medicine building on edge of Sutro forest, 3 blocks long, building LEED certified green roof
 - Astrid Hayarti: the City is working now on stonewater design guidelines any over 5000 sq. feet with an emphasis on storm water catchment – more than just points
- What about vertical gardens?
 - None of panelist have explored vertical gardens in great depth
- Permits are very expensive for ripping out part of sidewalk for landscaping. What can be done about this?
 - Mayor's Planning Dept. is working with DPW and improving sidewalk planting and tree planting project
 - Will implement in next month, a more user-friendly How To guide for home owners
 - Also working on program to remove concrete as concrete removal is very expensive
- RPD has policies that prevent volunteers from working on open space projects. How do we change that?
 - Tom: volunteerism has a long tradition in America, every town has a project that was built by volunteers in the community – Bay Area Trail, for example
 - My company uses volunteers for construction all the time
 - Litigation is used as excuse, but if project is well organized, planned and good leadership it can be completely safely

- Have to get over fear, helps if volunteers have experience with major success, then can build on successful use of volunteers
- Volunteerism is essentially an in-kind donation, but I don't see that discussed.
 - Arden: SFUSD uses help from volunteers all the time
 - Susan: almost everyone that provided programming at Sunday Streets did it free, 200 volunteers
- My park was built not by RPD, was done through grants, gift in place, when irrigation broke, RPD refused to repair it because it is not city installed item, all vegetation is dead, we have to think about long-term maintenance.
- Tom, have you had any experience working in communities in crisis?
 - Yes, founder of Community Built Association and often work in at-risk neighborhoods
 - process has to be different – more grassroots build up a trust

V. Open Space Update: Open Space Task Force and ROSE Update

Astrid Haryati (Mayor's Office) and Sarah Dennis (Planning Dept)

- ROSE (SF's Recreation and Open Space Element) will direct whole open space discussion
 - 7-8 months ago started work with open space task force
 - 1986 was last update of ROSE – it defined what kind of open space we want to acquire, talks about shoreline access, accomplishment: Presidio and Crissy Field, blue greenway is a new effort
- Why are we updating now?
 - New challenges:
 - SF is getting more densely populated
 - Parks are ageing
 - Funding is limited
 - Not a lot of new opportunities for new parks
 - Very little land for building
 - What are more creative ways of making open space
 - We need an open space plan with action items not policy documents
- Emerging themes for the next comprehensive open space plan:
 - making most of what we have
 - keeping up with growth
 - environmental justice and equity & sustainability and health
 - walkability – ten minute walk to open space
 - engaging the community
 - governance and maintenance
 - open space network: including the public realm
 - better streets plan

VI. Open Space Community Workshop Series: Q&A

Distribution of material and Q&A

- How can you get involved?
 - Meetings: Nov. 6th RPD Commission Hearing (2-5pm, City Hall), November advisory committee meeting, Open Space Task Force meeting on Nov. 13 (3pm, Pier 1, Port of SF)
 - Also will be conducting community workshops to get feedback from residents, now until February, 2009
 - Contact Karen Edwards for more information or to request a community workshop packet: (415) 621-3260 or kedwards@sfnpc.org.