

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**CONTACT:**

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Future of Open Space Community Workshop Series announced

San Francisco, CA, January 27, 2009. Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC), along with the City and community partners, is soliciting the public's vision and priorities about the future of parks and open space through a series of community workshops during January-March 2009.

"The difficulty of maintaining our parks, while also making sure that new parks are acquired and developed to meet current and future needs, is the challenge of our times," according to NPC's Executive Director, Isabel Wade. "We all know that parks are essential to our city in so many ways," she added, "but there is less and less funding to support them."

For the past year, this conundrum has been under study by the Planning Department, the Mayor's Office of Greening and the Recreation Department, along with community partners and leaders, in the form of an Open Space Task Force. The Task Force has been charged to develop a Framework for Open Space in the 21st century, starting with a 100 Year Vision for the future and a short-term (5-10 year) Action Plan of steps that can be taken now to protect, enhance, and even expand green space in San Francisco. On a parallel track, City Planning has prepared a new policy guideline to support the vision and Action Plan, ROSE (the Recreation and Open Space Element), which is being presented to the community for comments and ideas both online and in the Community Workshop Series.

"Public education about our open space maintenance and acquisition challenges has never been more important," emphasized Jim Lazarus, newly-elected President of the Recreation and Park Commission and Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce. "We really need to tap the creative talents and resources of San Franciscans to ensure that our parks can continue to serve as centers of our neighborhoods and as attractive tourist magnets too," he added.

According to Astrid Haryati, Director of the Mayor's Office of Greening, a number of exciting and innovative ideas about open space have been generated in the first few community outreach meetings. For example, one recommendation is for the city to hold an annual Green Up day and to facilitate the removal of concrete and asphalt on those days in schoolyards, sidewalks, and other patches of public land that can make a major difference in greening a neighborhood. "A dense and built-up city such as San Francisco must capture as much underutilized public right-of-way as possible in order to find adequate area for greening in many neighborhoods," she said.

To find the location and times of any of the more than 20 meetings taking place between January-March on Open Space: Challenges of the Future, go to

www.openspacesf.org/event or call NPC at 621-3260 to find out how you can host a meeting with your group or neighbors. Forms for 'do it yourself' meetings are available at www.openspacesf.org/meetingpacket

In addition, six special focus groups will also be scheduled on the following topics: Parks for Seniors, Environmental Justice and Open Space, a Youth Summit, Connectivity in San Francisco, Housing and Open Space, and Natural Areas. Please contact susan.exline@sfgov.org if you would like to participate.

You can still be heard if you cannot attend a meeting by filling out a feedback form with your ideas for priorities on open space issues and actions to improve our parks and to find space for needed new ones: www.openspacesf.org

About Neighborhood Parks Council:

Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) advocates for a superior, equitable and sustainable park and recreation system. NPC provides leadership and support to park users through community-driven stewardship, education, planning and research. NPC is a coalition of community-based park groups actively involved in improving neighborhood parks throughout San Francisco. Since 1996, NPC has grown to include 120+ park groups and 4,000 park volunteers, establishing itself as San Francisco's premier park advocacy group.

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