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San Francisco's Blue Greenway Gains National Recognition & Support from EPA

San Francisco (November 10, 2010): Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) was awarded \$175,000 from the EPA to heighten local community involvement in the execution of the Blue Greenway through a Brownfields Area-wide Planning process. The Blue Greenway is San Francisco's vision for 13-miles of waterfront parks and trails running from the Giants' AT& T Park to Candlestick Point. Since 2003, NPC has advocated for this "green" corridor of activity, relaxation, and discovery along the Southeast shore of the city. Today the Blue Greenway gets one crucial step closer to becoming a reality.

Citywide momentum has been building on the Blue Greenway project over the last decade. San Franciscans' desire for a world-class waterfront along the eastern shoreline launched the Blue Greenway vision and led NPC to create a Task Force of more than 50 NGO's and government agencies to transform idea of the Blue Greenway into reality. This vision stresses contiguous waterfront revitalization that will include bike trails, parks, and other recreational opportunities that improve human and environmental health and neighborhood vitality. NPC's advocacy efforts also led to the adoption of the 2008 Parks Bond, which granted \$22 million to the Port of San Francisco for several Blue Greenway projects now being planned for Port property.

"San Francisco is re-envisioning and revitalizing our Southeastern waterfront to create a Blue Greenway for future generations to enjoy," said Mayor Gavin Newsom. "Through the vision of the Port of San Francisco, the stewardship of the Neighborhood Parks Council, and support of the Environmental Protection Agency, this grant brings us another step closer towards realizing our vision of 13 miles of majestic waterfront parks and trails."

The geographic area of focus of NPC's Area-Wide Plan will include brownfield-impacted land currently not funded for remediation along the Blue Greenway alignment in Bayview, and India Basin. These neighborhoods represent the historical industrial heart of the city and are plagued by Brownfields, areas of containing industrial waste and toxins.

With the support of the EPA's Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Pilot Program, NPC will facilitate local engagement in area-wide planning of the Blue Greenway for the revitalization of the brownfield-impacted community of Southeastern San Francisco. "EPA is excited to initiate this new program to help residents more fully participate in planning efforts in brownfields-impacted communities," said Jane Diamond, Director of EPA's Pacific Southwest Regional Superfund Division. "With a combination of grant funding and technical assistance, EPA looks forward to seeing the results of the community's participation in the planning and development of the Blue Greenway in San Francisco."

Drawing upon expertise from the Center for Creative Land Recycling (CCLR), EPA funding will also be used to generate an area-wide plan with the community that will address how to remediate and transform 5-10 areas along the Blue Greenway that continue to have negative health and safety impacts for adjacent low-income neighborhoods.

“The Blue Greenway project will completely transform our city, making the southeastern waterfront a world-class recreation destination that connects us to nature and creates a unique trail corridor for bikers, pedestrians, kayakers and others,” Meredith Thomas, NPC Executive Director said. “To successfully implement this vision, we need to have strong leadership that will engage local residents in planning. Neighbors understand best what their communities need to become more green and prosperous.”

The NPC-led engagement process will give the neighbors an opportunity to express their open space, park and recreation needs.

CCLR is excited to be partnering with NPC on this important initiative designed to support a full community process for the development of parks and open space along our long neglected southeastern waterfront. CCLR will bring its expertise in the redevelopment of contaminated land having assisted hundreds of communities across the state with the clean up and revitalization of historically-neglected and environmentally-challenged property.

“In our work we witness the devastating effect that contaminated land can have on the landscape. The very existence of these neglected properties shrouded in some toxic mystery can have a suffocating effect on a community’s sense of worth. We have also seen first-hand how the revitalization of these sites can breathe new life into old properties and lift the community spirit. We hope to bring this revitalization process to the southeastern waterfront.” Stephanie Shakofsky, Executive Director, CCLR.

The area-wide planning process will leverage existing efforts to identify and reduce threats to human health and the environment, and will facilitate assessment and revitalization of brownfields in the target area by identifying site-specific reuses for them. The plans will integrate site cleanup and reuse into coordinated strategies to lay the foundation for addressing community needs such as economic development, job creation, housing, recreation, and education and health facilities.

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The Neighborhood Parks Council (NPC) is a nonprofit parks advocacy organization that has been providing leadership and support to park users through community-driven stewardship, education, planning and research for over 14 years. NPC advocates for a superior, equitable and sustainable park and recreation system in San Francisco. The Blue Greenway project is a crucial component of San Francisco’s shared vision for establishing and sustaining world-class open space and recreation opportunities. Find out more at sfnpc.org or bluegreenway.org.