



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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June 19, 2014

Members of the Board of Supervisors
City and County of San Francisco
City Hall, Room 244
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: **Adoption of the Recreation and Open Space Element Update of the General Plan**

1650 Mission St.
Suite 400
San Francisco,
CA 94103-2479

Reception:
415.558.6378

Fax:
415.558.6409

Planning
Information:
415.558.6377

Dear members of the Board of Supervisors,

The San Francisco Planning Department is seeking your support in adopting the update to the Recreation and Open Space Element (ROSE) of the General Plan, adopted by the Planning Commission on April 3, 2014. This effort started in 2007 including extensive outreach to engage many community groups and organizations interested in recreation and open space. The updated ROSE also reflects close interagency coordination between many agencies, including Planning, Recreation and Parks, the Port, and the Department of the Environment, as well as community non-profit partners including the Parks Alliance and Trust for Public Land.

General Plan Elements are high level policy and visionary documents that set the City's strategy, guide and direct decisions, and also showcase the city's vision to its own citizens and decision makers as well as to a national and international audience. The General Plan does not mandate or direct specific programs, legislation, or expenditures, but serves as a guiding policy framework by which the activities of City government are evaluated for consistency. It is challenging to create a guiding policy document that does not get caught up in the details of regulating or prescribing every action or program that decision makers or agencies might take, but rather establishes a framework for decisions. To tackle this challenge, we completed a long journey of learning, listening and collaborating with all constituents to present a balanced vision for recreation and open space in San Francisco. The last time the ROSE policies were updated was 1986. As the Planning Department of a city at the forefront of progressive planning, we believe it is crucial to update our vision for recreation and open space for the next 20 years.

The ROSE 2014 offers major directions the City should pursue when planning for recreation and open space. First is to capitalize on the existing valuable and extensive network of existing resources, to better utilize, preserve, and maintain these resources. Second, the City should expand the open space system to provide a well-connected network that is accessible, addresses

diversified needs, and prioritizes underserved areas. Third, the ROSE emphasizes environmental sustainability to enhance local biodiversity, and to pursue sustainable design efforts in the maintenance or design of our parks and recreational facilities. Finally, an underlying theme in the ROSE underscores community engagement and stewardship when planning and programming for recreation and open space.

We are delighted to present the ROSE before the Board for adoption after seven years of extensive outreach and collaboration with community members. On Monday June 16, the Land Use Committee of the Board heard this project and forwarded it to the full Board for its consideration. At that committee hearing, many recreation and open space advocacy organizations such as Parks Alliance and Trust for Public Land as well as other members of the community strongly supported the adoption of these policies. We also heard from a number of community members about their concern over one particular policy in this document. Policy 4.2 of the ROSE calls the city to "establish a coordinated management approach for designation and protection of natural areas and watershed lands." This policy recommends an inventory of all natural areas in the City in order to inform coordinated management efforts between the City and other land-owning entities (eg state, federal, private). This policy does *not* mandate specific management practices or require any specific treatment to identified natural areas (e.g. removal of eucalyptus trees or restricting access). This policy also does *not* prescribe expanding the Recreation and Parks Department Natural Areas Management Program (SNRAMP) to any area that is potentially identified. The SNRAMP is an independent program that is under development and will be before decision makers at a future date. There is already a Natural Areas Management Plan, adopted in 1995, that is in effect. Regardless of the outcome of the current SNRAMP effort this plan is in place and being implemented. It is also worth pointing out that the current ROSE (adopted in 1986) directs more strictly to preserve natural areas without recognizing the local biodiversity in the City. The 2014 ROSE update, however, focuses more on preserving local biodiversity, defining the term as inclusive of *all* plant and wildlife habitats and not just natural areas.

The six objectives in the ROSE and their underlying policies would direct all city agencies and recreation and open space constituents to create a well-connected and rich open space system that addresses the diversity of needs of San Franciscans. These policies do not prescribe any specific projects to occur or management practices to be undertaken but lay out the framework directing our actions related to recreation and open space. The ROSE stresses the need for further extensive community collaboration for all recreation and open space projects.


Lastly I would like to emphasize the need for adoption of the 2014 ROSE update as without this update the City will miss the opportunity to approve multiple forward looking planning ideas as adopted city policy: the 1986 ROSE includes an outdated priority areas for acquisition; it does not include criteria to oversee expansion of recreational and cultural buildings on open spaces; it focuses strictly on preserving natural areas without recognizing that local biodiversity includes native and non-native habitats; it does not recognize living alleys, Parklets, POPOS, or streetscape

improvements as vital supplements to our open space system; Green Connections project and the focus on well-connect and accessible open space system is absent from the ROSE 1986; and finally it does not discuss the need for community engagement and stewardship, which is stressed in a whole objective in the 2014 update.

On Monday June 16 Land Use Committee hearing, Supervisor Weiner made an amendment to the Resolution underlying the fact that approval of the Rose does not constitute approval of any specific project. Specific projects or programs will need to come before decision-makers and adopting the ROSE doesn't preclude any such review and approval process, and that Supervisor Wiener's addition to the resolution rightly emphasizes this point

Please contact us with any questions you may have. We are happy to meet with you and answer any questions.

Sincerely,



John Rahaim
Director of Planning

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