Meeting Notes: Portland Open Space Vision and Implementation Plan
Stakeholder Meeting No. 2
April 1, 2015
6pm – 8pm
Room: Portland City Hill, Council Chambers

Attendees:

Sally Deluca, Bethany Sanborn, Rick Knowland, Bill Needelman, Jeremy Bloom, Christine Cantwell, Bobbi Keppel, Laura Mailander, Nat May, Julie Mulkern, Anne Pringle, Rebeccah Schaffner, Amy Segal, Jan Kearce, Michael Mertaugh, Tom Jewell, Colleen Tucker, Kara Wooldrik, Kate O'Brien

Meeting Notes:

1. Review of project/deliverable. Base map is in good shape; if anyone finds anything missing, please let us know.
2. When reviewing definitions, Anne Pringle noted that we should change to just "cemeteries" and should not name Evergreen specifically.
3. Community meetings review: Kara gave a brief presentation on the report that Portland Trails recently completed re: the community meetings they led last fall.
4. Online survey results review: 1100 people responded. Note that this is a self-selecting group. For details, please see ppt slides on this topic or the summary findings report (revised: there was one column in the table on page 9 that has been corrected). Discussion:
    a. Action item: cross-tabulate for ethnicity and also for non-resident responses. (This was at the suggestion of Michael Mertaugh). The Portland open space system is really a regional system, and non-residents should definitely be considered users.
    b. Action item: get from Sally the 2006 survey and cross-reference results/demographics/top issues.
    c. The question of a phone poll was brought up to make sure we capture the voices of a wider range of people (seniors, as we have an aging population, for example). This is costly, but it is something to keep on our list.
5. Finalization of Vision Statement: Brief, guiding vision. Focus on brevity, specific to Portland, and aspirational. Version that the subcommittee came up with: ***Portland will build on our historic system of parks, trails, and open spaces to enhance our quality of life. Protect our environment, and promote the economic well-being of our remarkable city by the sea.***
    a. Comments:
        i. Colleen: Thought that the concept of sustainability should be included: Revise beginning to: "Portland commits to sustain and build on our historic system…"
        ii. Bill: Loves the Longfellow reference and use of "remarkable" – this used to be part of city's slogan.
        iii. Michael: Likes it. City by the sea is important to note.

      iv. Bethany: Should free physical activity/promotion of health/well-being be included?

      v. Anne: Likes the addition Colleen suggested above.

      vi. Nat: Likes it. Portland is Maine's largest city and therefore a huge economic driver for the state. Not sure how this would fold into vision statement above. (Not pushing a change)

b. Two versions will be presented to the Steering Committee to vote for final vision statement. One will be the subcommittee version and the other will be the modified version that Colleen proposed. There was not a quorum of Steering Committee members present so they will vote at a future time.

6. Creating Level of Service Goals: What services (related to parks, trails and open space) are we measuring and tracking, and how are we doing it?

a. Reviewed similar cities: Hartford and Burlington, talked to planners there. Burlington has decided to focus on maintenance/existing park revitalization in the near-term.

b. Kelley presented a couple of examples of common level of service goals:

      i. Measuring provision of physical space for parks, recreation and open space: for this it is common to divide your park system into different types (e.g. mini-parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, regional parks, special use parks) and then identify a desired amount of acreage for each of those categories. Kelley gave an example by putting Portland's parks into those categories and looking at how well they are doing in terms of acreage allotments by categories compared to common acreage goals for those categories.

      ii. Measuring accessibility of the current parks, recreation and open space. Kelley showed two maps – one that showed where the gaps in the current system are if you set a goal of having a park within .5 miles of every resident and one that shows the gaps if you set a goal of having a park within .25 mile of every resident.

c. We want to find measureable ways to look at success; what service should we measure/what do we want to see in 15 years? What service do we want to include in provision of space? Everyone was asked to complete a brief worksheet on their own, discuss it with 1-2 people, and bring their best ideas back to the group (see #7 below)

d. Initial comments:

      i. Bobbi: We may lose perimeter land as water level rises.

      ii. Colleen: look at the amount of use of existing space. More people using parks.

7. Small group feedback for "what services should we measure?"

a. Group 1: Community gardens and food: food security within walking distance (PROXIMITY would be measurement). Long wait-list for community garden plots (No wait list = metric?). Multi-generational use of space (playground for children and also senior citizens after school hours, for instance). Begs the question: is need different in different areas of the city?

b. Group 2): Measuring services provided for events – how many, what kind, do people know how to use public space for events?; Access: ease of access for diverse population

(bus routes, ADA, etc.); citizen stewardship of parks/caring for our parks; safety and maintenance; cleanliness; measuring how open spaces provide for wildlife (as well as our citizens).

   c. Group 3: Level of use balanced with ecological sensitivity; biological diversity (presence of invasive species); don't focus on the most easily measured – passive use of parks, for example: this is not easily measured.

   d. Group 4: How will we use narratives to measure park success?; preservation of historic parks/places; social and environmental metrics: justice, values, beauty, passive use; think of parks as buffers for climate change/sea level rise; Anne highlighted levels of service per category: expenditure per usage/acre – demonstrate how much we spend on each category.

   e. Group 5: Measure access of public space for residents (10 minute walking distance, for instance); Access to specialty parks needs to be measured (baseball fields, etc.). What are the barriers (roads)? Measure inter-connectivity between open spaces; integration with neighborhoods: how easy is it to access a particular open space from a neighborhood (sometimes this is harder than we think); access to nature and water; TREES – count them!

   f. Group 6: Ease of access for entire population (kids to seniors); sustainability – quality of open spaces; need to focus on maintaining; improve soil, at least on peninsula, using permaculture; benches/plans/pocket parks – all needed.

8. We need a SUBCOMMITTEE to create level of service goals. Volunteers: Bobbi, Michael, Colleen, Anne, Rick, Sally, Amy

9. Next Meeting: There's been a proposal to change the time to 4-6 pm on May 6 (instead of 6 – 8 pm). Action item: Troy will check with rest of steering committee.