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**Open Space Focus Group – First Meeting**  
**Tuesday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016, 4:00 p.m.**  
**Room 303, Duluth City Hall**  
**Meeting Summary**

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1. Welcome & Introductions

Keith Hamre, Director of Planning & Construction Services, welcomed the group to the first Open Space Focus Group meeting and described the meeting's agenda. All attendees were asked to briefly introduce themselves.

2. Brief overview - Timeline & Process

Ben VanTassel, Community Planning, described the purpose of the Open Space Group and how it will fit within the overall Imagine Duluth 2035 project timeline. The Open Space Focus Group will likely meet at least 3 times depending on how the process unfolds.

3. Review implementation strategies that have been completed or partially completed from 2006 Comp Plan to determine if the strategy is still relevant

Kyle Deming, Community Planning, reviewed the goals of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan and discussed the level of implementation that had happen since the adoption of the plan

4. Review research questions for the Imagine Duluth 2035 process

Ben VanTassel, Community Planning, reviewed the research questions and described the purpose for the questions. The group had the following comments:

- Pleased with how the Planning Commission and the Planning Department is handling the preservation of wetlands and creeks and protecting the watersheds.
- How does the City handle forest management? Does it Belong to parks? The city should consider reconstructing the department with parks and rec and elevating a resource protection program. There is a lack of tree protection from new developers and development.
- How is the city identifying those areas that are flood prone and what are the ways that we can manage open space to prevent flooding?

- Does everyone truly have access to enjoying parks? Not all have access; Central Hillside Community Park added new equipment that restricts access to previously used open spaces
- If everything is within 6 blocks of a park/open space, are neighborhoods being connected to the spaces?
- Are we best using our tax base to take advantage of our existing space? Is there a need to use our densities to have better parks in places that need them?
- Taller buildings take less view space while increasing density in areas that can use it, leave sprawl space for open space.
- There are other ways for organizations to help offset the cost of greenspace planning and maintenance.
- How does the TDR process fit with PUD? How do developers/developments work best to preserve spaces?
- Allocate the power/value of volunteers to maintain little parks while using money to maintain larger “showcase” parks
- How does the city plan to preserve parks without adequate funding? Overall, consolidate park infrastructure to best utilize maintenance funds.
- Duluth has value in green and open space, how do we sustain it?
- Not all people need to have equal access to open space; save parks and open space for those that live in high density areas. People in residential areas that have large expansive yards don’t need the same access as those that live in urban areas.
- More accessible open spaces near those places that have populations that have mobility barriers.
- How are we defining trails/recreation areas/open space?
- Most people have better access to parks, in Duluth, than in other places in the state
- How best to buy property for use while selling some for development? How do we identify essential vs non-essential?
- Urban agriculture should be considered for use of open space.
- How do we approach resiliency in terms of flooding?

5. Review preliminary data gathering and identify other potential resources

Community Planning staff reviewed some initial data related to parks and open space in Duluth and discussed what people shared through the Imagine Duluth 2035 survey over the summer.

6. Discuss any other emerging issues for this section of the Comp Plan Update

The group was asked about emerging issues that should be taken into the comprehensive planning process. Comments include:

- Identification of important preservation and restoration areas is important
- Innovative and progressive spaces should be explored
- Urban agriculture should be considered
- Green roofs and building parks could be integrated into the plan
- Density is not bad, rather, appropriate density is good

- Roof top gardens that are public space could be encouraged
- Innovative priorities in partnerships with developers
- Partnership between school district and the City of Duluth on what lands could become public land should be explored
- School forest could have a stronger partnership
- Accomplish goals of having better parks
- Stronger standards and better enforcement of landscaping in the UDC

## 7. Wrap-Up & Next Steps

Community Planning Staff welcomed the group to stay engaged on these topics and look for upcoming meetings to be involved with.

## Open Space Focus Group – Research Questions

Open space is perhaps Duluth's most distinguishing feature to those who choose to live and visit the City. We will work to understand the nature and value of our existing resources in order to achieve a balance between development and open space preservation. Through the planning process we hope to explore the following questions:

- How do we preserve sensitive land permanently?
- Are our open space areas well connected to our neighborhoods?
- Is the preservation of resources fair between neighborhoods?
- Do we all have equal access to enjoying resource areas?
- What are the direct and indirect costs to our region of holding land as undeveloped for preservation and open space?
- Can we sustain the amount of open and undeveloped space on our tax base?
- Can we sustain the current infrastructure network?
- Are there areas that put too much demand on infrastructure and services?
- What tools could be utilized to make us a more resilient community with ever changing climate factors?