



Open Space Focus Group
Tuesday, March 9, 2017, 5 PM
Bagley Nature Area Classroom
Meeting Summary

1. Welcome & Introductions

Adam Fulton, Community Planning, welcomed those in attendance gave a brief overview of the purpose of the meeting.

2. Brief overview - Timeline & Process

Ben VanTassel, Community Planning, gave a brief description of the Comprehensive Plan process and how this meeting fits into the process.

3. Activity: *What are your top policy priorities related to Open Space?*

Review attached summary.

4. Research Review: Maps and information

Comments/Discussion Points:

What is Open Space?

- Anywhere with no buildings
- Designated parks
- Lakes and rivers
- Community gardens and ag areas
- Paved areas – urban plazas
- Neighborhood flower gardens
- Highway medians
- Place to get away from people
- Structured or unstructured
- T-F Properties

Barriers to Parks/Open Space

- Cliffs (Ely Peak) and railroads (CN) and private owned land
- Polluted land/water
 - Steal plant site
- Major/fast roads
 - I-35 cut off river access
 - Can of worms

- 23 (Grand Ave)
- Poor sidewalk conditions, “walk” signal timing
- Lack of signage to find open spaces/parks/trails
- Trailheads – parking access or park
- Non-motorized access to parks

How to Incorporate Resiliency?

- Green infrastructure to manage storm water as green corridors
- Implement existing natural resources rules more strictly
- Consider citizen panel for environmental protection
- Ed and transportation and open space are linked
- 6,000 of 10,000 acres of open space are owned by city
 - Transfer more to city
- Limit pavement above bluff to prevent flooding
- Human resiliency – food access locally/regionally
 - Incorporate edible landscapes

Ecological Value

- Hawk Ridge example private ownership cutting off access
- Purchasing (city) can be better at preserving
- Understanding the value of eco.
- Natural areas need less maintenance (or gardens)
- County/city comp plans
 - Complimentary

Infrastructure

- How to get info into decision makers?
- Trailheads/access points
- Developments should not cut off access
- Including SLR

5. Open Space Priorities and Draft Policy Development

Review attached summary.

6. Wrap-Up & Next Steps

POLICY DISCUSSION

The following policy ideas were shared at the second open space meeting. Items in bold were identified as most important during the activity.

Develop a healthy community

- **Urban Agriculture, specifically urban orchards. Address UDC approved landscape materials.**
- **Open spaces are opportunities to integrate health into the development of areas. That incorporates health education and community.**
- **Food. Public /community garden space or “free gardens”**
- **Open spaces should have health related policies that include commercial tobacco spaces, public art, safety, etc.**
- **Small areas around open creeks can be swimming opportunities to cool down and learning to swim.**
- Spaces created could create a sense of connectivity. A place for neighbors to gather and interact.
- Become a dark skies city! No light pollution
- Commercial tobacco free spaces and policy related to open spaces. The chemicals in cigarette butts are toxic and can harm gardens and wildlife- second hand smoke harms animals and people
- Can't beat walking-labeled and maintained trails
- Environmental preservation and define who and how that is done.
- Support outdoor recreation opportunities
- Developing comprehensive food policy for Duluth. Commission, Urban Ag, Resilience, Sovereignty
- Trees-especially mature ones, add quality of life to neighborhoods. They also reduce stress in humans and contribute to mental health. All efforts should value old-growth trees and their protection.
- Strengthening the life style in our neighborhoods- health, recreation, community and place, and history
- Sell the properties to interested buyers if land isn't serving purpose intended for.

Integrate fairness into the fabric of the community

- Indigenous place names/education on places that are important to indigenous people in our community
- Bilingual signage
- Equal access to green space for all social and economic groups? Do certain socioeconomic groups have access to only certain types of green space?
- Actively promoting the enjoyment of natural space/outdoor recreation across age/ability/income/neighborhood/etc
- Provide a mix of outdoor activities to include quiet natural areas.
- Everyone can help keep spaces clean and litter free
- Open space in walking distance of all neighborhoods

- Match programming and amenities to the cultural desires of surrounding residents- increase uniqueness!

Include consideration for the education system in land use actions

- **Educate people on what natural/open spaces are, and issues related to them**
- More education materials in parks (tree ID tags, history, informational signs, links to organizations)
- Open spaces can be an educational opportunity for children and families

Create efficiencies in delivery of public services

- **River Environmental Advisory Council**
- **Get all tax forfeit lands in Duluth**
- **Need an Urban Forester-type position fulltime.**
- A full time city forester-type position with sufficient staff to care for and tend to the entire urban forest
- Be sure we have the resources- financial and staff time to maintain trails and facilities, that we build and develop into the future. Don't build/develop what we can't maintain/patrol/cleanup/etc. Includes enforcement which we don't have.
- Utilize green infrastructure in areas with limited access to park/openspace to provide connectivity and encourage active transportation while provide other social, environmental, and economic benefits. (eg stormwater management, air and water quality improvements, etc)

Strengthen Neighborhoods

- **Achieve a balance between development and greenspace.**
- Evaluate small lots to determine if they could be sold for infill housing. Funds to improve larger parks
- Activate unused green space in Lincoln Park neighborhood to the level seen in other neighborhoods
- Achieve a balance between development and parks/recreation to strengthen neighborhoods.
- Outdoor recreation
- Prioritize construction of safe neighborhood access to parks, trails, and greenspace.

Reinforce the place-specific

- Including lake and bioregion in all policy decisions
- Water draws people. Preserve for public benefit, as much of the shoreland as possible.
- Retain as much of the natural character as possible, because it is the primary driver that has renewed Duluth over the past 2-3 decades. It is the "golden egg"

Create and maintain connectivity

- **Plan for funding needs to maintain parks and purchase property or pit in conservation easements to connect the system.**
- **Consider the city's financial resources to see what can be maintained, retained, and connected.**

- No loose dogs in parks- dangerous for mobility impaired individuals
- Open spaces should be easy to access and open for the public to use and connect with each other in a good way- with seating and enough lighting and maintenance to keep it safe
- Daylighting all streams
- Open spaces should provide opportunity for health. Parks-play area for children to play. Trail to walk/exercise. Garden-healthy good/environmental benefit. Human made ecosystems.
- Creating corridors for wildlife and people between natural areas/parks.
- Turn some of the biking trails into hiking trails.
- Open space for Parks and Recreation where appropriate.
- Help people work together to maintain open spaces/wood lots across property lines
- Use open space that promotes connectivity
- Connect natural areas
- Acquire tax forfeit lands
- Linking Open spaces across the city (present and future)
- Provide safe access from neighborhoods to green spaces
- Budget for Park system maintenance- trails, stream corridors, trees down, parking lot enforcement, etc.

Encourage mix of activities, uses, and densities

- **Balance open space and development (figure in development into open space)**
- **“Fun” programs in open spaces to draw attention to them**
- Avoid over-density of recreational uses (Example-frequent criss-crossing of walking optimized and biking optimized trails)
- Open space that is actively used
- Mixed use spaces- i.e. variety of activities at parks; keep some places quiet and rural feeling
- Understand that “multi-use trails” designed by mountain bikers are not hiking trails for people to experience nature. (nor are wheelchair trails) Need to dedicate more trails to foot traffic only (circular routes)

Support private actions that contribute to the public realm

- Start volunteer corps/sponsor a park program
- Foster neighborhood green space stewardship by surrounding residents
- Make it easy for citizens to contribute to Emerald Ash borer detection and treatment
- Allow permaculture growing on tax forfeit lots
- Strengthen/formalize relationships with volunteer-based or nonprofit community partner organizations
- Leverage the passion and expertise in the private sector

Take sustainable actions

- **Construct swales, berms, ponds to slow, sink, spread water runoff using keyline and permaculture principles. Plant fruiting shrubs on upperside of berms**
- **Stricter ecological requirements for public and private land and promoting incentives for ecological care maybe through environmental advisory council.**

- **Protect open space near the headwaters to protect streams and increase resilience.**
- Change our language to eliminate the dichotomy of open space vs. all land- thinking of all earth in decisions
- Control buck-thorn and deer
- Manage invasive species to protect/preserve native plants and wildlife
- Increase public transportation
- Protect H2O (hydrology, H2O quality, peak flow alterations, etc)
- Equal and sustainable maintenance of our open spaces now and forever into the future
- Develop a position description for a city forester to manage both boulevard, park and wild land forests
- Capture parking and roof heat with solar (renewable energy). There are places for solar panels/solar farms in these areas.
- Creating a green zone around community to preserve nature

Reserve previously developed lands

- **Show city owned clarity about what's open space, park, and what uses are: need good signage and communication to public**
- **Utilize brown space as a way to preserve green space**
- Develop brown sites and previously developed sites. Do not take greenspace- especially historic, publicly popular greenspace for new development
- Development should focus on brownfield sites as much as possible. This preserves natural areas, and allows for revitalization of site that are under-performing
- Don't spread development into undeveloped areas. (Ex: land along amity creek between Vermillion Rd and Jean Duluth Rd)
- Open space for development where "developable"
- The River is also open space. Create more public access and open space along River (US Steel)

Declare the necessity and secure the future of undeveloped places

- **Focus on "wild spaces" not just parks**
- **Designate and protect adequate green space for both ecological values and human use values**
- **Preserve high quality natural resources and water quality- look at areas with utility limitations for most aggressive protection**
- **Maintain open space that is wild for conservation purposes. It will need minimal maintenance**
- **Protect forest connectivity and watersheds by securing open lands and redeveloping brownfields**
- **Density swaps/urban growth boundaries**
- **Develop open space management program within city administration to permanently protect and manage open space**
- **Implement land swaps to protect/preserve existing forests, wetlands, and open space that is in the headwater area over the hill**
- **Prevent sprawl and protect all open space by concentrating growth in urban/neighborhood centers, restricting development and open space, and transforming tax forfeit land to city park land**

- Bold, visionary, permanent protection of the current open spaces in our city (even if they are “only” wetlands). Having lived in cities in the west who missed an opportunity to protect land, I see this as urgent and essential to maintain the character of our city and what makes it unique.
- Keep as many areas wild as possible so our youth can experience unstructured time in nature.
- Protect watersheds
- Leave some areas “natural”- don’t park-icize every park
- Create a ring around the city of protected space beyond which no further development is permitted
- Preserve natural spaces, limit sprawling development
- Restore native forest communities
- Protect forests, wetlands, and other existing “green infrastructure” up over the hill in the headwater areas of our streams to provide storage for storm events
- Obtain all tax forfeit land within city limits
- No more sprawl. Redevelop properties in our urban center/or in neighborhood centers, and also concentrate services/infrastructure (transportation, etc) there. No more Rice Lake Road (etc) developments.
- Preserve some open spaces just for conservation without recreational plans for it.
- Permanently designate open space lands (on title)
- Natural resources- water quality
- Preserve remaining green space and wetlands to mitigate increased severe precipitation happening with climate change
- Work with the county to convert tax forfeit lands into green space for resiliency, temperature(cooling), connectivity.
- Designate and protect key natural areas\
- Building Density swaps for preservation land

Support traditional economic base

- Promote open space with smart development. Housing/economic development

Support emerging economic growth sectors

- **Invest in sustainable urban agriculture**
- Do not “litter” with over development of narrow recreational interests
- Invest in urban agriculture; soil testing, mapping ideal locations, low-cost sales/leases of tax forfeit land for agriculture
- Open spaces should include public art which provides culture and beauty as well as supporting local artists and their work.