

Greenspaces Policy Advisory Committee
Mike Ragsdale, Chair

MEETING NOTES

Thursday, February 23, 2006
5:30 – 7:30 PM
Metro Regional Center, Rm. 501
600 NE Grand Ave, Portland, OR

Committee members present: Chair Mike Ragsdale, Ernie Drapela, Kim Gilmer, John Griffiths, Mike Houck, Linda Robinson, Zari Santner, Mike Sykes and Dan Zinzer

Committee members absent: Scott Burgess, Faun Hosey, Sue Marshall and Dick Schouten,

Elected officials, staff and guests present: Jennifer Budhabhatti, Chris Carlson, Robin McArthur, Joel Shaning and Pat Sullivan

General Update:

Mike Ragsdale called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm. Chris Carlson introduced Joel Shaning, a doctoral student in sociology from the University of Oregon with an interest in urban design and urban policy. Joel will help research interjurisdictional relationships and assist with the institutions scope for 2006.

“New Look”

Robin McArthur, Deputy Director of Metro Planning, gave a presentation on the “New Look” project, which is a reassessment/update of the 2040 Plan. Robin asked the group how to integrate parks and greenspaces into the long-range picture of the region and the relationship between Planning’s “New Look” work and GPAC’s adopted Vision. She also pointed out that the Regional Transportation Plan is being updated. She gave a presentation, which highlighted the work plan for the “New Look”. A hard copy of the presentation is attached.

Background: The “New Look” is an update of the 2040 process. Two years ago, the Metro Council decided to take a look at the 2040 plan and identify what was working and what was not. The 2040 plan predicted a million more people by 2040, however, the prediction now is more likely for 2030. Thus, the “New Look” has been initiated.

Committee discussion on “New Look”:

Economic valuation for natural areas

Mike Houck suggested that economic values of natural resources not be overlooked when market forces for the “New Look” are being discussed. He stressed the importance of ecosystem services, ‘natural capital’ and that those assets need to be included in any such discussion. Robin stated it is still not known how natural resource values will be translated into economic terms. A study was mentioned of evaluating the economics of protecting floodplain versus building storm water pipelines. Zari Santner informed the group that there was a discussion on ways to calculate economic value of parks and open spaces at a meeting held at Oregon State University. Chair Ragsdale stressed the need to value property near streams and open spaces. Mike Sykes noted the importance of the acquisition of acreage from the 1995 bond measure around Forest Grove, which has led to the protection of open space along Gales Creek and the Tualatin River, which would have been lost to development.

Strategic Investments inside the UGB

Mike H. recommended that when the Metro Council discusses strategic investments for centers, investment in operation and maintenance of parks and greenspaces also be considered. Zari added that the Portland City Council will be asking about funding for operation of existing parks and openspaces - a key question that needs to be addressed. Linda Robinson suggested that open spaces need to be integrated with centers to make them viable and livable communities.

Influencing the “New Look”

Robin and the committee members mutually stressed the need for GPAC to connect with the “New Look”. The 2040 plan focused narrowly on transportation and density rather than parks and greenspaces. Zari described the crux of GPAC’s work as answering the question “what is the regional system?” and “how is it defined?” Mike H. emphasized how important it is for projects such as the New Look to include open spaces, parks and trails, etc. when referring to infrastructure. Robin appreciated all the suggestions made and acknowledged that greenspaces will be an important component of the “New Look”.

Shaping the Region

Robin talked about greenspaces affecting the shape of the region and Chair Ragsdale suggested calculating its “carrying capacity”. Mike H. recommended that it was important to recognize physical features in the landscape as a boundary to limit and shape growth.

People’s Opinion

Mike H. noted the value of numerous surveys that have measured people’s opinion about growth and open spaces. For the opinion poll on the “New Look”, log into the following site <http://www.metro-region.org/article.cfm>. Oregon Parks and Recreation also did a survey on people’s attitude towards recreational use in the three county area in 2000. Zari mentioned that the City of Portland, as part of the mayor’s visioning process, interviewed over 700 people on their opinion about parks, greenspaces and trails, but that work is not ready.

System Plan

Chris introduced this subject and suggested that instead of initiating a discussion of the system plan it was important to know about Metro's database and the type of information it contains. Jennifer Budhabhatti presented the data as a series of overlays. Metro parks updated its database in 2003 on parks owned by 24 cities, three counties and two park districts. There are approximately 1,500 parks in the database which contains information for each park on the following: the owner, manager, trails, places for wildlife watching, fishing, swimming or any active recreation associated with it such as soccer, tennis, baseball field, etc. Other data include ADA accessibility, restrooms etc. Metro also is a source of data on privately owned greenspaces and public schools with attached recreational centers. Metro DRC updates its information quarterly and Metro Parks updates its park layers every five years.

Jennifer displayed the data in two formats: one was a map of all publicly and privately owned parks in the region. The other format broke the data down into a series of three overlays:

Layer 1: Publicly owned natural areas greater than 40 acres, plus regional destinations defined by access to water and/or regional scale facilities (e.g., Blue Lake Park).

Layer 2: Regional trails plus publicly owned parks of less than 40 acres with facilities such as trails, playgrounds, picnic shelters, etc.

Layer 3: Publicly owned community centers, fairgrounds or stadiums, golf courses, pools and public schools attached to ball fields, soccer fields, tennis courts, etc.

Mike H. said that the system was 70% completed. He suggested the missing pieces were Goal 5 natural areas, greenspaces outside Metro's boundary and bond measure target areas. Zari added that the layers presented were similar to an earlier discussion about: 1) open space, 2) self recreation and 3) programmed recreation.

Chris noted that it would be important to define the system for new urban areas, Zari agreed and suggested that standards be set for each layer to identify the gaps and to give communities the opportunity to identify what they want. She said the more equitable the system, the more every jurisdiction can live within their means.

Kim Gilmer added that she met with Chris, Dan Zinzer, Zari and Chair Ragsdale to discuss the system and to plan a meeting with park directors to identify gaps and determine the minimum service level for all and a planning and funding strategy. Zari added that one fear directors have expressed is that Metro will take over the process and dictate standards for all local jurisdictions. Thus it is important to get local governments involved. Mike H., Chair Ragsdale and Dan all agreed that getting local directors involved to develop a regional strategy with funding attached may be acceptable by them. Mike S. emphasized that local park managers are more amenable than other

officials to work with Metro because of its success in acquiring open spaces regionally. The group agreed that getting the system going would open up interest in the funding and institutions work and that information coming from outside Metro would not create pushback.

Financial Strategy

Chris informed the group that Metro's financial staff will help Jeff Tucker on the financial strategy. The work will include:

1. Identify how local governments are spending dollars on parks acquisition and operation and maintenance.
2. Identify where revenues are coming from.
3. Identify the gaps
4. Research on innovative finding sources and techniques.

Chris added that steps 1 and 2 should be completed by June 6, 2006. Mike H. recommended that we look at new sources of revenue, such as a tax on videos. John Griffith informed the group that Vancouver gets its revenue from a real estate transfer tax, but Zari added that the tax has been tapped for affordable housing. Zari said that innovative funding sources were a key to fund parks.

Institutions

Chris said that Joel Shaning will initiate the first five steps of the institution work plan. One identified step is to interview park directors: Chair Ragsdale suggested that Joel join them in the discussion with park directors that Zari, Kim and Dan are organizing. Joel informed the group that it would be difficult to find a model but good partnerships could be highlighted for this study. Mike H. recommended that Minneapolis could be used as an example for the study. Kim suggested looking into partnerships in Canada. Zari added that it was important to look outside the park system for an example.

Communication with Council

Chair Ragsdale informed the group that he will make a short presentation on GPAC to MPAC March 8th and to the Council on March 9th. He asked members to contact him if they had suggestions for these presentations. Mike H. recommended a once a year work session with the Council to discuss parks and greenspaces.

Bond Measure

Zari informed the group that on March 1st the City of Portland Council will recommend a resolution to support the bond measure that includes 20% for the grant fund and a 2 (Metro):1 (community) match. Metro's current draft recommends 5% should be recommended and a 2 (community): 1 (Metro) match.

Mike H. has expressed concern about how complex this issue of the opportunity fund has become. He suggested that the criteria be kept simple and that finer details be finalized and publicized later as the grant program develops. Dan and Zari agreed with his suggestion. Zari warned the group that for the Portland Council, schools may be a priority.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.