
LOS ANGELES POLICY AND PROGRAM TRENDS THROUGH THE YEARS



TODAY: Reimagining an Accessible Open Space Network

The City's parks and recreational open space are experiencing a renaissance as local communities imagine a green network that is equitably dispersed and suits the needs of diverse park users. Faced with park shortage, programs such as the '50 Parks Initiative' bring more parks to more people. In 2015, the City introduced 'A Plan for a Healthier Los Angeles' as part of the General Plan to promote programs that support physical activity and healthy environments. In 2016, 'Measure A' guaranteed continued funding for development of the region's park system. The City's Quimby and Finn developer fee regulations were also revised in 2016 to more effectively fund park space in the city.



2000s: Conservation of Natural Resources

Conservation efforts came the forefront of open space discussion as Los Angeles began to reimagine ecological resources. The Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve was established in 2003, the LA River Revitalization Master Plan was introduced in 2007, and the South Los Angeles Wetlands Park was conceived in 2008. The Conservation Element of the General Plan, revised in 2001, emphasized the importance of natural resources and supportive wildland policies. Programs such as Propositions O, 12, and 40 were passed during this period to support local park projects and natural resource protection.



1980-1990s: Revitalization of Urban Parks

During this period, Los Angeles made efforts to revitalize urban park space and begin discussions on park equity for underserved communities. To this end, a number of programs were introduced: the Department of Recreation and Parks' Urban Impact Parks Program (1988), Proposition K's Los Angeles for Kids Program (1996), and the Los Angeles Police Department's Safe Parks Program (1997). At the turn of the decade in 2000, Recreation and Parks introduced the CLASS Parks Program to renew park facilities and instill pride and vibrancy in city neighborhoods. The Public Recreation Plan portion of the General Plan was introduced in 1980 to guide the development and disbursement of park resources.



1960-1970s: Regulation and Funding of Recreational Resources

Formal regulation began framing a network of open space. The State of California introduced park developer fees in 1965, which was later adopted by the City in 1971. The California Coastal Act of 1976 guaranteed public access to the iconic shoreline beaches that are treasured by Angeleños today. On the heels of open space investment, the Department of Recreation and Parks' budget took a hit with the passage of Proposition 13 that limited increase on property taxes, which are allocated for various public services.



Pre 1960s: Laying the Foundation

In the City's formative years, Los Angeles' policy makers began to witness sprawling development encroach on a nascent open space system. In 1930, the Olmstead brothers envisioned the City's open space as an extensive network of parks and trails with the Los Angeles River as the centerpiece. Unfortunately, the Army Corps of Engineers began to channelize the river with concrete in 1938 to prevent the frequent flooding events that plagued the city. By 1957, Los Angeles' began a new, robust open space system through Proposition B, which provided an unprecedented \$39.5 million in funds for recreation and park needs. This money was to be managed by the new Department of Recreation and Parks, established only a decade prior.