

Open Space Meeting Highlights

Host: Department of City Planning
Date: October 25, 2017
Location: Emerson College
Meeting Objective: Listen to Community Concerns and Identify Opportunities for Open Space

Summary

The General Plan update—OurLA2040—is a historic opportunity to foster public participation to help guide policy development that will impact planning and land use decisions twenty to forty years into the future cutting across a variety of social, environmental, economic issues. On October 25th, the Department of City Planning OurLA2040 team hosted a community event to discuss the future of open space in Los Angeles.

Participants sought to identify opportunities to not only preserve existing open space, but create new, publicly accessible open space opportunities. During the meeting, the community expressed that open space has the potential to offer multiple benefits that serve social and environmental needs. Participants expressed that open space intersects with other significant policy challenges such as housing affordability and availability. In particular, what impact will Los Angeles' housing crisis have on open space opportunities in the future? Participants communicated that the City should embrace creative opportunities for open space, but also ensure that these opportunities are diverse in services and amenities, accessible to the public, and have continued maintenance.

The following themes, issues, and opportunities emerged throughout the evening.

Top Themes

- **Park Distribution**
 - Many communities lack adequate access to parks or diverse recreational amenities and services. Creative opportunities exist that the City should seize and/or reduce roadblocks for to increase park equity.
- **Wildlife preservation**
 - Open space serves not only people, but our diverse wildlife. As the City identifies areas to preserve or reclaim land for wildlife, we also need complementary policies within city boundaries to keep wildlife safe and healthy (e.g. dark sky policies limiting light pollution).
- **Maintenance, Operations, & Safety**
 - Adequate maintenance and operation programs are required to preserve our existing green assets such as street trees. Parks should provide high quality and well maintained amenities, such as lighting and restrooms, for all.
- **Housing vs Open Space**
 - As Los Angeles faces both a housing crisis and open space shortage, how do we balance the need to build more affordable housing while creating access to open space opportunities?
- **Private vs Public Open Space**
 - Recreational facilities and services should not rely on private open space opportunities created by new development. How do we create opportunities that are available to all?

Key Issues

- Since the Olmstead Plan, Los Angeles has lost open space and the physical connections between green spaces.
- The urban tree canopy has been decreasing due to numerous factors including poor maintenance of street trees and low priority to preserve existing trees with new development.
- The privatization of open space was a concern to participants because it is largely inaccessible and does not benefit the community. Private open space, including rooftops, should not be considered as a stand-alone solution as we seek open space opportunities.
- While open space is a desirable amenity for Angelenos, it could also spur displacement and gentrification. How can we make sure that open space serves all?
- Participants cited issues of homelessness in many parks throughout Los Angeles. Additionally, park amenities such as bathrooms need to be better maintained for all park users in light of the recent Hepatitis A outbreak.

Open Space Opportunities

- Pocket parks are a great opportunity to increase park space, but one size does not fit all. It is important to build diverse and well programmed parks appropriate to the community.
- Participants want to see more creative solutions to create more open space such as parking spot conversions, vacant lot rehabilitation, activation of median strips and other right-of-ways, etc.
- Joint-use of public spaces and recreational sites and facilities should be encouraged. The City should overcome the challenges of establishing joint-use agreements.
- The City should require developments to set aside publically accessible open space.
- Explore funding mechanisms for providing more open space. With an emphasis on local community input, citywide policies should also identify how the City can leverage existing resources to create more open space, such as the Los Angeles River.

Suggestions for Further Research and Discussion

- What funding sources currently exist to address the impact of new development on park acreage and the overall need for more parks in communities? What potential development standards or fees can the City promote to increase park acreage?
- What are the creative solutions to diversify our inventory of recreational open space without relying on private open space development or smaller park typologies such as pocket parks?
- How can the City leverage new policies such as the Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones (UAIZ), or even create new policies such as Green Wall Districts, to create equitable access to open space?
- How do we encourage new development to provide publically accessible open space lands?