

Summary of Comments from Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting on Draft General Plan Parks, Open Space, and Recreation Goals, Policies, and Actions

June 12, 2014

A one-hour study session was held with the Parks and Recreation Commission to review the Draft General Plan goals, policies, and actions on parks, recreation, and open space. Jeff Bond introduced consultant Barry Miller. Barry did a PowerPoint presentation providing an overview of the General Plan. He walked the Commission through the six proposed park/open space goals. The public was given an initial opportunity to comment. No comments were received (two public comments were received following Commission discussion).

Comments from the Commission were requested. *Note: Comments below are listed sequentially by page and Goal/Policy/Action number, rather than in the order in which they were brought up by Commissioners and the public.*

General:

- How will these policies be used in practice? How are competing goals balanced against each other? *It was explained that the General Plan was like the City's "constitution" and that various regulations such as zoning and the Municipal Code provided the implementing tools for carrying out the policies.*
- To what extent will the General Plan be used to regulate private property? What regulations will be developed to carry out the goals?
- What is the definition of open space and how is this definition used? Is the Albany Bulb considered open space? What about parking lots, or vacant land zoned for development?
- Can the Commission have an opportunity to review Conservation and Sustainability policies?
- Any policies for Albany Hill should be mindful of constitutional issues regarding the cross on the hill (*public comment*)

Comments on Goal 1:

- Is Goal 1 too strong? If we have a goal to maximize open space, does that mean we can't have any more development in the City? Does this apply to private property or just public land? Why is "aesthetics" listed here? (*Author's note: Perhaps change "Maximize the preservation, enhancement, and expansion of open space in Albany" to "Preserve and enhance open space in Albany for...."*)
- Policy 1.9: Could this be used to regulate what people do in their backyards? To address heritage trees? Two Commissioners suggested possible deletion; one Commissioner suggested this be retained. (*Author's Note: One possibility could be to change "minimum yard areas" to "minimum front yard areas."*)
- Add several policies here:
 - Encouragement for rooftop open space, including green roofs, rooftop parks and gardens, solar panels, and other forms of usable open space

- Address the role of open space in stormwater management and watersheds/ water quality planning
- Look at the Caltrans ROW where Buchanan goes under I-80. There is a lot of open space there that could be improved---not really for recreation, but at least for aesthetics, landscaping, art, etc. Acknowledge the possibility.

Comments on Goal 2:

- The Commission generally agreed that per capita service standards should be adjusted to reflect an overall goal for total acres of active parkland per 1,000 residents rather than breaking the goal down by each type of park, as was done in 2004. There was also interest in clarifying which parks were in each category, and providing a clearer link between the service standards and existing conditions.
- Policy 2.3 should be clarified to note the standard is a minimum, not a maximum
- Define “special use park” and clarify what a “regional park” and “open space” are in the context of this plan and the standards

Comments on Goal 3:

- Policy 3.5: Policy on dogs has erroneous information in second sentence. Memorial Park dog play area is multi-use and not just a dog park. Also, sentence does not reflect current rules for leashed/off-leash dogs. Suggest clarifying or deleting this sentence (*Author’s note: Second sentence will be deleted.*)
- Policy 3.6: This policy appears to commit the City to artificial turf and night lighting—both of which require additional study—there is not a consensus that these are desirable. Barry noted that this is the existing (2004) City policy and the wording was conditional (“Consider...”). It was also suggested that this policy be balanced by something promoting preservation of dark skies. (*Author’s note: policy will be deleted. Dark skies policy to be included in the Conservation Element.*)
- Policy 3.8—should not limit vegetation management to Creekside Park and Albany Hill. Other parks also need management. This policy should also reference the use of recycled water for landscape irrigation.
- Add a policy calling for improvements to park signage.
- Action 3.C-add the Ohlone Greenway to the list, specifically the idea of adding a mini-field just north of the Berkeley border
- Action 3.D-there was some discussion of whether to add language calling for a bathroom in Dartmouth Mini-Park. It was noted that this was controversial and there were strong objections when this was proposed before. It was agreed that we would end the sentence with the word “tot lot” and delete the portion on developing a picnic area and shelter.

Comments on Goal 4:

- Policy 4.5: Add school facilities. Also, is there any way to engage the business community in this?
- Consider moving Policy 5.8 here, to address the relationship between City recreational programs and those offered by the School District or other entities. Or perhaps cross-reference Policy 5.8 here to make the connection.

Comments on Goal 5:

- Add an action program to periodically revisit the joint use agreement, including consideration for access to the High School pool. And perhaps the School could have occasional access to the concert stage.
- Change Action 5.A to “periodically evaluate” City support for the JPA for Tom Bates field instead of providing unconditional support into the future. Some of the Commissioners and public speakers felt the City was not getting what it had paid for. It was suggested that the City do a yearly evaluation of costs and benefits of this particular JPA.
- Potentially add an action to use the old library on Solano Avenue for additional recreational programming. There was some discussion about whether the YMCA was now using this space.
- Consider additional language on the Gill Tract.

Comments on Goal 6

- Policy 6.3/Action 6.B: Trail safety should address homeless encampments on Albany Hill and more general safety issues on the hill. Perhaps expand Action 6.B to address personal safety and other security issues.
- Policy 6.4: (*public comment*) Policy on interpretive signage should also address general directional signage, which is lacking on most trails in the City.
- Action 6.F: Add par course to the list of possible improvements in the greenway. Also add something about connecting the senior center to the greenway, as it is currently hard to get to one from the other.