

Albany Planning and Zoning Commission
July 23, 2014 Meeting Summary

Study Session on Draft Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element

Barry Miller, General Plan consultant- delivered a PowerPoint presentation on the Draft Park, Recreation, and Open Space policies. He noted that a similar presentation had been made to the Parks and Recreation Commission several weeks earlier, and referenced a memo in the agenda packet which summarized that Commission's feedback on the draft policies. Miller asked that the Planning and Zoning Commission provide additional comments, and that the public be given an opportunity to comment on the Draft language.

Commissioner Pilch asked if it would be possible to amend the 2004 Parks Master Plan after the General Plan was adopted, and if there was anything in the General Plan that would conflict with that Plan. Chair Donaldson asked if there were standard guidelines for how many acres of parkland the city needed based on its population forecasts.

An opportunity for public comment was provided:

- The first speaker noted that the Albany Hill Master Plan discouraged the removal of eucalyptus trees unless they infringed on the oak woodlands. He thought it was a good idea to expand Overlook Park. He noted that people feel disenfranchised because multi-family housing is paying a high flat tax for vegetation management. He asked that the Plan specify that new trails take slope into consideration and not be too steep. Trails should follow contours rather than going straight up the hillside.
- The second speaker asked that the language in Policy 1.2 (preserve the crest of the hill as open space) be expanded to include the adjacent hillside areas.
- The third speaker suggested that the City purchase the 11 acres south of Gateview Towers and convert it into a park.

Chair Donaldson brought the item back to the Commission for discussion.

- The Chair began by saying he had some concerns about the policy to encourage rooftop open space. He felt this should be handled on a case by case basis. He noted that there needed to be better coordination between the City and AUSD, as there had been issues with sharing the pool.
- Philip Moss asked if Policy 1.9 conflicted with housing goals. Perhaps add the word "front" (to yard) since there are rarely issues with home additions on rear yards. He also suggested the city considering lowering the lot coverage standard for persons wishing to add a detached second unit so there was a sufficient yard area for each household. David Arkin noted that lot coverage was rarely a constraint.
- Philip Moss suggested that the City do more with the Ohlone Greenway and asked what level of control the city had over that space, given that it was also BART ROW. He noted that Cougar Field was outside the City, and suggested that staff take a look at the agreement that allows the City to use it. David Arkin replied that Cougar Field was a good example of the City and School District working collaboratively. It was further suggested that staff look at the Joint Powers Agreement for UC Village, and make sure it is structured so that Albany residents can use facilities in the Village.
- Chair Donaldson suggested adding a reference to Action 5.E to coordinate with EBRPD on Eastshore State Park (or add a x-reference to wherever this is addressed--1.E?)

- David Arkin indicated his support for rooftop open space, and suggested the City develop guidelines for the development of such space. Chair Donaldson was cautious, noting that this could trigger a rush of applications for persons to put decks and porches on their roofs, and residents vying to see over each other's rooftops to improve their views. He noted he would support roofgardens if the City could deal with visual issues and view concerns.
- Nick Pilch suggested the City pursue grants. He asked for more information about a Park Commission comment that the policies appeared to infringe on property rights. He suggested that the policy on artificial turf be removed, as this was an ongoing issue.
- Phil Moss noted that state law provided a sufficient level of protection regarding light intrusion, and that a dark skies ordinance was not really needed
- The Commission concurred that the Plan should include park acreage standards, but also should clarify the definition of "usable" open space. The City should also allow off-site open space to meet the in-lieu requirement.
- David Arkin noted that it was important to still require private open space, to complement public space. He also thought it was important to address creek daylighting opportunities. Barry Miller noted that this would be covered in the Conservation Element