

**Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department**

**M E M O R A N D U M**

Date: June 29, 2006

To: Planning Commission  
Tom Passanisi, Principal Planner

From: Corinne Centeno, Park Recreation & Community Service Director

Subject: Parks and Recreation Commission Review of Open Space Element

At their Wednesday, June 28, 2006 meeting, the Parks and Recreation Commission undertook a review of the draft General Plan Open Space Element. It was the consensus of the Parks and Recreation Commission to recommend the following changes:

**Introduction**

1. There should be a statement that Redwood City is blessed by a wealth of open space resources and the potential to return areas to their natural state to create new open space (i.e. creeks).
2. It is not clear whether the draft is suggesting that our challenge is to maintain open spaces at their existing levels, add to existing levels of open space, or decrease levels in reasonable ways. The selection of one of these choices should be the essence of the element.
3. **Page 1, Purpose of the Element.** The State statute describes open space as “any parcel or area of land or water that is unimproved and devoted to open space use”. By this definition, active parkland, social spaces and community gardens are not part of open space.
4. **Page 1, Paragraph 3,** Purpose Statement seems to suggest that the open space definition changes over time.
5. **Page 2, 6<sup>th</sup> bulleted item,** should remove “roadway medians” as an open space area.
6. **Page 4, first paragraph,** there is a reference to State guidelines for park acreage of 3 to 7 acres. Please reference the source of the information. The Quimby Act suggests 3 to 5 acres for parks. Is this an open space or a park standard?
7. **Page 4, second paragraph,** the document language changes from guidelines to standards with no explanation of the difference. Redwood City

- meets the standard because we are asking the standard be established based on existing parkland. We are at the bottom of the suggested guideline. There is also an issue with respect to how it is distributed. The fact that Redwood Shores is a master planned community is not needed.
8. **Page 4, last line, first paragraph**, insert “active” in front of “parkland per 1,000 residents.” The same is true in the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph.
  9. **Page 4, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph**, “Most of the development will be on infill sites”. In terms of our Nexus Study, infill is a small number of total new units.
  10. Under the current circumstances, we deal with a higher demand for sports fields and small parks than we can supply. Future population growth will only exacerbate these issues.
  11. **Page 4, 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph**, Plans for the impact fee do not belong here. There should be a statement to the effect that Redwood City expects to maintain its active parkland ratio by various means: “charging impact fees, through the Parks for the Future 1/8<sup>th</sup>% sales tax, gifts and bequests” (and whatever else we can think of). Details do not belong in the plan.
  12. **Page 4, 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph**, the proposed development ordinance seems out of place in this section. It is more of a goal or task.
  13. **Page 5, Paragraph 2**, the fees and seeking grants should probably be included as a goal or task.
  14. **Page 5, Paragraph 3**, Land is land - it is no more difficult to find land for parks than it is for a commercial office building.
  15. **Page 5, Policies**, add a policy that all park improvements and development will include outreach to the surrounding area for input and desired features.
  16. **Page 6, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph**, are social spaces distinct from parks and open space? The policy says that we need to make all public spaces comfortable.
  17. **Page 6, Paragraph 5**, remove the word “enough”. Social spaces should be pleasant and attractive.
  18. **Page 7, Social Spaces**. Is this an important enough issue to have a separate heading and this amount of space in our General Plan?
  19. **Page 8, Paragraph 4**. There is something missing at the end of the first line. “...when completed will most of which follows the ridgelands...” makes no sense.

20. **Page 9, End of last paragraph.** We cannot legally require private projects to allow public use of their facilities. We can work to partner with them, but we cannot require them to allow public use.
21. **Page 9, Potential Open Space.** Some of the Hetch Hetchy Right-of-Way is open to the public now. Are you suggesting this is a space for active parks?
22. **Page 10, Rooftops.** Rooftops do not meet the definition of open space. Do you mean park or social space? What do rooftops do for the public?
23. **Page 13, Open Space for the Preservation of Natural Resources, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph,** it should be Federal and State governments (plural). In the next to last sentence of that paragraph, change to, "Portions of two of these types of open space areas are located in, **and contiguous to,** Redwood City."
24. **Page 14, OS-6.** We have no jurisdiction with regard to the Don Edwards SF Bay Wildlife Refuge or the Edgewood Park Nature Preserve. We can support the preservation, maintenance, etc. of those lands, but cannot "preserve, maintain or enhance" those lands.

Lastly, the Commission discussed several options to deal with what they saw as their most significant issue with the draft element. In brief, that issue is that parks, social spaces and community gardens are not open space as defined in the draft. They commented that including them in the Open Space Element seems to add to the confusion instead of providing greater clarity. This confusion came up in the public hearing on the element on June 6<sup>th</sup> and has to do with what we mean by open space vs. urban parks vs. social spaces. The two terms were used interchangeably by many of those commenting on the draft. The Commission noted that all specific reference to parks in the existing General Plan seems to be found in the Land Use rather than the Open Space Element.

Ideas for dealing with this issue ranged from expanding the Open Space Element to Open Space, Parks and Public Places Element to moving the information on Parks and Public Spaces to a new optional Parks, Recreation and Community Services Element of the General Plan. Ultimately the Commission unanimously passed the following motion:

M/S Swope-Joseph: to recommend to the Planning Commission to include a Park and Recreation Element as an optional element for the General Plan.