

E. Open Space



1. Goals and Opportunities

During the last five decades, the City of Norwalk has been transformed from a predominantly agricultural area into a highly urbanized environment where few areas exist in a natural state. "Open-space land" is defined in State Planning and Zoning Law as any parcel or area of land or water which is essentially unimproved and devoted to:

- Preservation of natural resources, including plant and animal life habitats.
- Managed production of resources, such as ground water recharge basins and agricultural land.
- Outdoor recreation, including parks, areas of outstanding scenic or historic value, and links

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between major recreation and open space reservations, such as utility easements, banks of rivers and streams, and trails.

- Public safety, such as unstable soil areas, flood plains, and high fire risk areas.

Open space in Norwalk principally involves public parks, schools and developed greenbelts. It is essential that these open space areas be preserved and enhanced to continue to serve the citizens of Norwalk. The following goals have been established to guide management of open space resources:

- To ensure that open space land for recreation purposes is provided in adequate quantities and within reasonable proximity to meet the needs of the citizens of Norwalk.
- To establish comprehensive recreational programs to meet the broad needs and interests of Norwalk residents.
- To ensure the planned development of the City's recreational facilities.
- To establish financing mechanisms to fund City parks and recreational facilities.

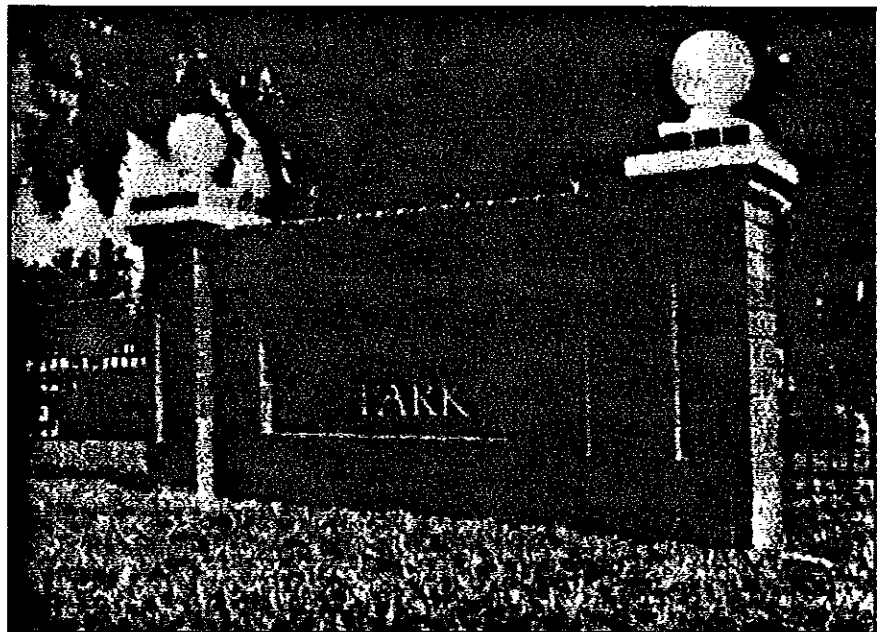
2. Existing Open Space Resources

Existing open space resources include: parks, schools, the San Gabriel River Channel, the streetscape and private and group open space on residential developments.

a. Parks

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Although the development of gardens had occurred throughout history, the first planned city park was not developed until Frederick Law Olmstead teamed with Calvert Vaux to design Central Park in New York City. The theory behind the original park movement rested upon the belief that the majority of urban dwellers could not escape to the countryside to enjoy the natural landscape.



The City of Norwalk contains fifteen public parks ranging in size from 0.66 acres to 20.0 acres. The parks encompass approximately 129 acres in total. The City's parks have been divided into four categories based upon size, facilities offered and area served. The City Land Use Map shows the location of Norwalk's parks.

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Small-Parks (less than 3 acres): These parks are often designed to serve specific population groups such as Seniors and young children. They generally contain swings, slides, tot play areas, benches and open spaces. Small parks are often created in higher density neighborhoods where less on-site open space is available. Norwalk has four small parks:

- Glazier Park
- New River Park
- Glazier Park Greenbelt
- Orr Park

Medium Size Parks (3 to 15 acres): Ranging in size from 3 to 15 acres, these parks are often located adjacent to a school. Ideally, the medium size park provides space for outdoor and indoor recreation and can accommodate children from five to fourteen years of age and family groups. Areas for preschool children are also included. Norwalk has seven medium size parks:

- Gerdes Park
- Bob White Park
- Hermosillo Park
- Vista Verde Park
- Zimmerman Park
- Ramona Park
- Lakeside Park

Large Parks (15 acres or larger): Parks greater than 15 acres in area attract both young people and adults, and provide outdoor and indoor facilities to accommodate a wide range

of recreational interests. Such parks can include fields and courts for various sports, a swimming pool, community center, picnic areas, and play areas. Norwalk has two large parks and one golf facility:

- Norwalk Park
- Holifield Park
- Norwalk Golf Course (9-hole)

Regional Parks: Regional Parks are generally greater than 50 acres. They attract regional users from as far as an hour's driving time away. Norwalk does not have a regional-serving park. However, Norwalk resident's have access to many regional recreational facilities, including an 18-hole golf course. The nearest regional parks are:

- Cerritos Community Regional County Park
- La Mirada Community Regional County Park
- La Mirada County Golf Course.

b. Schools

Schools can supplement existing parks by providing additional recreational space. Norwalk maintains recreational facilities on several school sites. Many times school facilities are conveniently located next to park facilities. The total acreage devoted to school facilities in Norwalk is approximately 400 acres.

c. San Gabriel River Channel

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Located along the western boundary of Norwalk, the San Gabriel River Channel offers biking, horseback riding and hiking trails. The San Gabriel River Channel is under the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation.

d. Streetscape

While not intended for specific recreational purposes, the streetscape, including sidewalks, landscaping, street furniture, lighting and signage, provides an open space environment for the use of residents, visitors, shoppers and employees. The streetscape in Norwalk varies significantly throughout the City. Some streets, such as San Antonio Drive and Bloomfield Avenue, have established landscaped medians, while other streets have minimal landscaping. A consistent approach to streetscape can help define commercial and residential districts, create distinctive entries and pedestrian areas, and in general enhance the public open space in Norwalk.

e. Private and Group Open Space

Since access to leisure is an important component of a decent and desirable living environment, private open space, and group open space for multiple-family developments should also be provided on each residential lot. Where possible, the provision of outdoor seating areas, plazas, and other amenities for office and commercial development can create pleasing environments, which will increase the

desirability of these public spaces. These open space areas should be usable, both in terms of size and location.

3. Open Space Needs

The City's goal is to provide not less than 1 acre of usable public recreational open space per 1,000 persons. With approximately 129 acres of City-owned parkland, and an estimated population of 97,959 in 1995, the City provides 1.32 acres of parkland per 1,000 persons. To maintain the City's park standard of 1 acre per 1,000 persons, the City's population could, theoretically, grow to a maximum of 129,000 persons, albeit there are other constraints to growth. Thus, with regard to recreational open space, existing recreational resources are ample to meet the projected population growth stated in the Housing Element.

Although a minimum standard of 1 acre per 1,000 persons should be maintained, the City should continue to seek reasonable opportunities to expand its park system and recreational opportunities to accommodate future growth and improve the overall living environment.

4. Objectives and Policies

The following objectives and policies are intended to guide future development and enhancement of open space resources:

a. Recreational Programs

Objective

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- To provide programs and facilities to meet the varied needs of residents of the City of Norwalk, including the elderly and handicapped.

Policies

- Encourage development and maintenance of recreation programs which address the diverse needs of the various age and interest groups, including the elderly and disabled.
- Ensure that residents of Norwalk are given priority in participation in City-sponsored recreation programs, activities and leagues, and use of City facilities for such activities.
- Encourage development of facilities and programs for indoor and outdoor activities to meet unique neighborhood needs.
- Encourage the active involvement of all residents in the planning of recreation programs and facilities.

b. Park Design, Landscaping and Maintenance

Objective

- To provide parks and recreational facilities which are designed, landscaped and maintained to provide a high quality recreational experience.

Policies

- Ensure that new park and recreation facilities are designed to meet City standards.
- Update existing park facilities as appropriate to promote more efficient use of parklands.
- Develop or upgrade park facilities to meet the American Disability Act (ADA) requirements.

c. Park Safety, Accessibility and Compatibility

Objective

- To provide parks that are accessible and safe for users and compatible with neighboring uses.

Policies

- Encourage the design of parks including activity buildings, outdoor facilities, people-gathering areas, lighting, parking areas, and other elements so that they do not adversely affect adjacent uses.
- Develop park facilities within convenient walking distance of residents.
- Encourage integration of parks and open space into new residential neighborhoods.

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- Encourage parks which are located, oriented, and designed in such a way as to facilitate security, policing, and maintenance.
- Ensure the supervision of park activities and promote enforcement of codes restricting illegal activity.
- Develop or upgrade park facilities to meet the American Disability Act (ADA) requirements.
- Expand the permanent supply of usable recreational open space by obtaining new land area, or requiring new developments, such as residential subdivisions, to provide adequate on-site recreational facilities.

d. Financing

Objectives

- To provide means by which the costs of park and recreation facilities and programs are borne by those who benefit and contribute to additional demands.
- To ensure that the City has the funds to carry out needed improvements to existing facilities.

Policies

- Require that developers contribute to

provide parks and recreational facilities to off-set additional demands brought about by new development, including use of Quimby Act, Parkland, Park and Recreation Dedication and Fees.

- Encourage the development of recreation programs by non-City public and private sports organizations.
- Promote the provision of private open space and recreation facilities in large-scale residential developments in order to meet the open space and recreation needs that will be generated by the development.
- Encourage the inclusion of private outdoor and indoor recreation facilities in large commercial/industrial projects as a benefit for employees and as a means of reducing demand on public facilities.
- Promote the development of commercial recreational facilities which complement public parks, facilities, and programs.

e. Streetscape

Objectives

- To establish a quality public open space environment which enhances the overall identity of the City.
- To establish a consistent approach to

public streetscape, including sidewalks, landscaping, signage, furniture and lighting.

Policies

- Encourage development of a cohesive streetscape through the City.
- Encourage coordination between private development and public streetscape, including landscaping, signage and lighting.
- Encourage active community participation in developing design priorities and specifications.

f. Private and Group Open Space

Objectives

- To establish quality residential neighborhoods and commercial environments through the provision of adequate private and group open space.

Policies

- Usable private and group open space should be provided in adequate amounts and locations to meet the needs of all on-site users.
- Suitable amenities should be provided within private and group open space

areas to encourage their use.

5. Implementation Programs

a. Recreational Programs

- The City shall consider the establishment of cooperative agreements with the School Districts for the use of school facilities for City-sponsored recreation programs.
- The City shall work with the School Districts to explore opportunities to use closed school sites for recreational and cultural purposes.
- The City shall periodically survey community attitudes and preferences concerning recreational programs.
- The City shall establish a methodology for periodically surveying community attitudes and preferences for recreation facilities and programs, and shall compile statistics concerning use of recreation facilities and program participation.
- Amend the appropriate ordinances to reflect new park standards and requirements.

b. Park Design, Landscaping and Maintenance

- The City may prepare and adopt a Parks

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Master Plan that establishes goals, policies, and standards for the location, size, and level of development of all existing and proposed parks. The master plan shall cover at least the succeeding 10-year period, with greater detail devoted to improvements planned for the first five-year period.

- The City shall replace existing landscaping where it is severely deteriorated.
- The City shall monitor, review and assess design, landscape development, and maintenance of parks, to ensure that design standards are met.
- Identify potential park sites by monitoring real estate activity in the City. When a site is made available on the market, the City should consider its appropriateness for use as a mini-park or if contiguous with existing parks, as an extension of that park based on:
 - Configuration and usability for parkland.
 - Costs of acquisition and improvements.
 - Availability of revenue.
 - Compatibility with adjacent uses.
 - Loss of housing units.
 - Significance of existing structures as architectural or historical resources .

- Site accessibility.

c. Park Safety, Accessibility and Compatibility

- The City shall coordinate park security between the Parks Department, Public Safety and Police Department to ensure that parks are adequately patrolled.
- The City shall consider re-designing and siting of existing public restrooms in parks to discourage illicit and illegal activities.
- The City shall restrict and control nighttime park use so that adjacent residences are not adversely affected.
- The City shall plan park maintenance schedules, and watering at key times to directly discourage illicit activity from occurring in the park and recreational facilities.
- The City shall provide adequate illumination to promote nighttime security.

d. Financing

- The City shall regularly monitor county, state and federal programs for funding of parkland acquisition, development, and rehabilitation. The City shall actively pursue funding for which it is qualified.

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- The City shall periodically review projected park development needs and plans, update cost estimates for park acquisition and development, and remaining development potential based on the General Plan. Based on this review, the City shall adjust the park development fee schedule as necessary.
- The City may prepare, adopt, and periodically update a long-term Major Projects Financing Plan, including parks, which identifies:
 - Service standards.
 - Specific project descriptions, including cost estimates.
 - Schedule of improvements.
 - Financing responsibility, including techniques to be employed.
- The City may adopt and implement an official park acquisition program to meet current and future needs; including direct input for capital budgeting purposes and periodic reviews of changing growth rates and General Plan policies.
- The City shall establish a formal mechanism by which gifts and dedications of parks and open space may be accepted.
- The City shall consider the sale of bonds

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as a means of generating funds for park and recreation services.

- The City shall consider financing through the Mello-Roos Community Facilities Act.
- The City shall develop a program to encourage private contributions to recreational programs vis-a-vis the Chamber of Commerce, and other local business associations.

e. Streetscape

- The City may develop a Master Plan for landscaping public right-of-ways which defines types and spacing of trees. The plan shall recognize the need to distinguish between neighborhoods, identify commercial areas, promote views of storefronts, and emphasize key intersections and entry points.
- Require all new developments to install street trees in accordance with the streetscape Master Plan.
- The City shall establish consistent design standards for public lighting and signage. The standards shall consider appearance, security, pedestrian activity, and compatibility with adjacent uses.
- The City shall survey existing sidewalks and prepare a plan for repairing broken

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sidewalks and replacing sidewalks in certain commercial areas with distinctive, safe materials such as textured concrete or brick to enhance the pedestrian environment.

- The City shall develop a program to systematically replace lighting and signage or landscaping which does not meet City design standards.
- The City shall establish a Capital Improvements Program to provide for phasing and financing of streetscape improvements. This program could include the implementation of development fees, assessment districts, community facilities districts, or other mechanisms.
- Develop a method by which business and community participation is encouraged in developing and implementing streetscape design.

f. Private and Group Open Space

- Zoning Ordinance provisions should be reviewed to determine if adequate open space is being provided for new developments, land use entitlements, or other modifications.