



OPEN SPACE (1962, R1992, R2000, R2001, R2007)

Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects believes that the current growth and development, whether in urban, suburban, or rural landscapes, create increased pressures on remaining open space. It is imperative that the leadership at the national, state and local level develop appropriate policy, strategies, and criteria for the preservation and protection of land and water for use as open space. Dedicated open space should be required as a component of all public and private development from small site-specific projects to regional land use plans. Each community should contain ample and ecologically diverse open spaces to meet the range of human and environmental needs and to sustain interconnected natural systems in perpetuity.

Rationale

Open space preservation is a very important component of any responsible development or land use strategy. Depending on scale, open space provides multiple benefits which may include enhanced water and air quality, improved habitat, decreased stormwater run-off and the desirable aesthetics of natural surroundings. Open space preservation within private developments provides additional opportunities for resource protection and active or passive recreation, complementing local governments' actions to acquire and maintain parks and natural areas.

Public open spaces may include view corridors; linear greenways along waterways and railroad rights of way; privately owned lands covered by scenic easements; the preservation of rural landscapes that are threatened by development; wetlands; and the preservation of areas of ecological importance. These areas may contain resources that benefit the public health, safety and welfare, as well as provide increased biological diversity and other natural functions and values. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, soils, hydrology and vegetation of an area should be preserved with the open spaces creating a rich network of interconnected parks and natural areas.

Open spaces fulfill multiple functions including opportunities for recreation, environmental education, and natural resource protection. Some natural areas should be set aside as open space without physical access, particularly in sensitive areas such as coastal areas, riparian corridors, steep slopes, canyons and less common and/or intact natural areas.

Open spaces can also be reclaimed from development or from previous extensive modification, such as mining areas, channelized waterways or drained wetlands. Returning an area to a natural condition, even on a small scale, provides benefits to all life.

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