

OPEN SPACE (1962, R1992, R2000, R2001, R2007, R2016)



Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects believes that 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 systems, creating a shared community value in perpetuity. Each community should contain equitable access to ample and ecologically diverse open spaces to meet the range of human and environmental needs and to sustain the integrity of natural systems. Dedicated open space should be a component of all public and private development from small site-specific projects to regional land use plans.

Rationale

Open space creation, promotion, and management is an essential component of any responsible development and land use strategies. Depending on scale, open space systems 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 public and 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 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, natural areas, and community gathering spaces.

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

A variety of mechanisms for acquiring open space (donation, land transfer, purchase) should be explored. Open spaces can also be reclaimed from development or from previous extensive modification, such as mining areas, channelized waterways, drained wetlands, or landfills. Returning an area to a natural condition, even on a small scale, provides benefits to all life. Means for maintenance and/or enhancement of open space areas needs to be properly considered to ensure their long-term value.