

Debunking the Carlsbad City's Myths about Parks and Open Space (responses to July 15, 2014 workshop):

The following is what city staff presented as these “myths”, the city’s response, and our perspective on each (based on months of research).

1. Where did the 40 % open space estimate come from?

Staff says:

This was just an estimate that about 25% of the city was constrained, undevelopable land. Then in 1986 the Growth Management Plan(GMP) required 15% open space for each Local Facilities Management Zone(LFMZ- one of 25 areas the city is divided into). Those two numbers were added together to make 40%- but 40% is not an actual performance standard. At the time of the GMP in 1986, 11 of the LFMZ’s already “met” the 15% open space requirement. The others had plans for achieving the 15% as development moved forward. “The city continues to work toward 40% open space, but may be a “tad” short. “

We say:

We agree that 40% open space is not required - but it has been a **goal** since 1986. That goal has been repeated for years, with an expectation that the city was actually committed to working toward that goal. Many of the LFMZ’s “met” the open space performance standard by being exempted- they actually had far less than 15% open space. Now, as the city is planning for build out, they have completely dropped this goal and in fact have no stated goal for the amount of open space that will remain at build-out. Why can’t they keep 40% as a goal and make a real commitment to work towards it?

2. Does the city double count HMP and parks ?

Staff says:

No. For those parks that contain habitat, the HMP acres are counted as Category 1 open space (natural resources) , the rest of the acres are counted as Category 3 (outdoor recreation).

We say:

Yes. The city explanation mixes apples and oranges. The open space map staff is referring to describes **land use** categories - not what is used to determine performance standards. What matters is what is counted toward meeting the performance standards. For the 15% open space performance standard the city includes some land from Category 1 that is actually hardlined preserve or HMP land. The HMP land is protected open space that does not allow any active recreation. The park performance standard of 3 acres/1,000 residents includes a little over 100 acres of this hardline preserve land. These 100 acres are counted both as

preserved natural open space with no recreation allowed, and as a park where of course active recreation is the core use. We call that double counting because the same acres of land are counted for both.

3. Does the General Plan reduce the amount of open space conserved?

Staff says:

No. The city will have more open space in the future than they have today. "We will see an increase in open space between now and build-out."

We say:

Yes. Part of the land you experience as open space today will be built on for the 23,000 new residents, 7.5m sq ft of commercial, and 2,600 hotel rooms that will be added with the GP. The city does not count this as a loss of open space if the land has development rights. But the community character will certainly change when undeveloped land is developed and more and more people are using less and less open space.

4. Will the city be short of city park land at build-out?

Staff says:

No. The city is projected to exceed city parkland requirements by 50 acres even with all of the residents added with the General Plan.

We say:

Yes. The current and future park acres are over stated because over 100 acres of land are double counted. The city will be short over 50 acres at the projected build-out population. Plus that does not account for all of the things counted as parks that should not be- like the picnic table behind the Shell station or the fenced, gated and locked school yards.

5. What is not included in city park acreages ?

We agree with the list they provided. But it is more important to consider what is included in park acres. That is what is used to determine compliance with the performance standard. The picnic table behind the Shell station, locked school yards, and over 100 acres of habitat are all counted as park acres.

6. Does the city count school grounds as parks acreage?

Staff says:

Yes- the areas covered by joint use agreements are counted

No- the other parts of school sites are not counted.

We say:

Yes- the city gives full credit to these school grounds as a park. These grounds are not available during school /after school activities, and are only available to organized sports teams – not the general public. City parks are open to everyone, seven days a week from dawn to dusk. Why should this restricted use get full credit as a park- especially when many neighborhoods have no other park available to them?

7. Does the city count preserve acreage as part of the total acreage of certain parks?

Staff says yes and we agree- this is the double counting addressed above.

8. Does the city apportion future Veteran’s Memorial Park to all 4 quadrants?

Staff says:

Yes. It is a special resource area with city wide and regional significance so ¼ (or 22.5 acres) is allocated to each quadrant.

We say:

No other park in the city is counted in all 4 quadrants. The Senior Center serves all 4 quads- but is only counted in one. **No other special resource area is counted** toward meeting the park performance standard. The Lake Calavera preserve, beaches, and lagoons are all recognized as “special resource areas” with city-wide and regional significance but they **are not counted at all** towards the 3 acre/1,000 residents park standard. There is only one reason Veteran’s Park is counted in all 4 quads- because without those park acres the city would **fail** to meet the park performance standards. If it is a park, it should be counted only in the one quad where it is located. If it is a special resource area, it should not be counted at all.

9. How does Carlsbad compare to other cities ?

Staff says:

Carlsbad has more open space than neighboring cities and is the only one to have an adopted HMP.

We say:

The other cities were close to build out when the regional MHP was adopted in 2004 and had little habitat left to preserve. Carlsbad adopted their HMP for 2 reasons : 1. It was a requirement in order to get the permit from the CA Coastal Commission to build the golf course. 2. The state and federal wildlife agencies would not allow any more habitat take permits without it. (This would have stopped most development in the city). Having the HMP allows development to proceed much more easily – which is why developers support it. The motivation for the HMP was development- not habitat protection. The price for the rapid development of the last few years was the requirement to preserve thousands of acres of land. Only time will tell if this was a trade-off that benefited the community.

Please contact the Mayor and City Council at council@carlsbadca.gov or call them at 760-434-2808 and tell them you're not satisfied with the staff answers. You want them to support amendments to the General Plan to do the following (but please put in your own words):

- **Continue the goal for 40% open space at build-out that has been promised since 1986**

This is not a mandate it is a goal- something to strive towards. The General Plan includes thousands of new residents, commercial space and hotels- there needs to be a balance that assures there will be open space too.

- **Every neighborhood deserves to have a park**

This is consistent with the community vision and goals for a healthy, active, outdoor lifestyle. It is a critical part of quality of life and no neighborhood should be shortchanged. Consider alternatives to achieve this- like adding a new performance standard of .5 acres/1,000 residents or a goal for a park (with full public access) within ½ mile of all residents.

- **Don't sell any city land without first thoroughly considering its value as a park or other community use.**

This applies to the Buena Vista reservoir and the other nine parcels included on the list of excess city properties- like the land around City Hall.

- **Treat Veteran's Park like every other special resource area in the city.**

Don't manipulate the numbers by calling this special resource area a park and counting it in all 4 quadrants.

- **Commit some of the \$74 m in excess reserve funds towards parks and open space.**

The city calls these funds "excess" because they are above what is already set aside as reserve funds to assure service levels can be maintained in economic downturns. These are your tax dollars – they should go towards your priorities.

The Mayor and City Council will only make these changes if they hear from you- the residents of Carlsbad. This General Plan will determine Carlsbad's future. What do you want Carlsbad to be like at build-out? Tell the Mayor and Council.

Together we can fix the General Plan – and make sure the Carlsbad of the future does not compromise parks and open space!