

OPEN SPACE/  
RECREATION ELEMENT

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HAWTHORNE

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GENERAL  
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OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ELEMENT

CITY OF HAWTHORNE GENERAL PLAN

March, 1989

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City of Hawthorne

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## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ELEMENT

### SECTION I - INTRODUCTION TO OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ELEMENT

Open spaces serve many needs, especially in our urban environment. In the broadest sense, open space refers to all land which is not covered by buildings or structures. Within urban areas, open space usually refers to parks, plazas, medians, and bicycle or jogging trails. Open space may also include waterways, undevelopable areas due to environmental constraints, or pockets of vacant land used for horticulture or as nature preserves.

Open space can affect, or be affected by the nature of development. Open spaces offer aesthetic variety and relief from hard urban materials by proffering green areas of natural form and soft textures. Open space shapes the environment by limiting densities, buffering land uses and integrating urban forms. Open spaces can be used to protect and conserve our natural resources such as watersheds and spreading grounds.

## SECTION II - EXISTING CONDITIONS

Very little open space remains in Hawthorne today. The City has been a fully developed, community for quite some time and therefore it is a geographic area in which undeveloped lands are a scarce resource.

Open spaces which still exist within the City are predominantly composed of parklands, school yards, horticultural plots, railroad rights-of-way, flood control channels, Southern California Edison easements, and small isolated, vacant lots. Expansion of residential neighborhoods has been responsible for the most recent declines in park open space average.

At present, the City has approximately 148 acres in some form of open space, although this figure includes some structures. Of this, 68.6 acres are zoned as Urban Open Space (UOS).

### Publicly Owned Open Space Lands

Seven publicly-owned parks located throughout the City encompass 35.5 acres of open space. The municipal pool and tennis courts together constitute another 1.5 acres of recreation space. In addition, the City leases from the federal government 20 acres of land located 100 miles north in the San Gabriel Mountains. This is known as Hawthorne Youth Camp, a special mountain retreat and recreation facility.

### Institutional Lands

Presently, there are ten elementary schools, two junior high schools and one high school located in Hawthorne. The City leases land from the school districts which own the property. These school-owned properties include approximately 50 acres for recreational use. However, this figure includes some structures and has also been somewhat diminished with the need to accommodate increased enrollments at elementary schools (due to the Century Freeway construction), which has necessitated the placement of trailer classrooms on local play area sites.

### Additional Open Space Areas

The City also owns three small lots adjacent to the Civic Center. One is vacant, one is a vest-pocket park and one serves as a community garden. The City also operates and leases a small nursery lot and owns and operates maintenance yards. The median strip along Hawthorne Boulevard can also be considered as City-owned open space, and because of its central location which provides a strong visual image for the City, should be given special attention.

<b>County-Owned Facilities</b>	County-owned facilities in the surrounding area include four parks and one golf course. Together they comprise 220.2 acres of recreation open space, with 131 of these acres devoted to golf.
<b>Private Open Space</b>	<p>The Southern Pacific Railroad Company owns a number of railroad easements for lines and spurs within the City. The Southern California Edison Company has a 120-foot wide right-of-way easement in the southwest corner of the City. In addition, the County Flood Control Department operates privately-owned Dominguez Channel. A bike path has been designated along 120th Street and El Segundo Boulevard. The County will maintain the path as a portion of the County System of Highways and a section of the regional path. The City will pay for the cost of maintenance.</p> <p>The California State Transportation Department (CALTRANS) owns a substantial portion of land adjacent to the I-405 (San Diego Freeway), which runs through the southwest portion of the City. These parcels, known as the Glasgow Strip, will be devoted to a freeway sound attenuation berm and open space. Approximately 11.3 acres of land could be used as a linear park, which most likely would be developed as a jogging trail and 3-par golf course.</p>
<b>Hawthorne Airport</b>	The Hawthorne Municipal Airport property is owned by the City of Hawthorne. Although the 120 acres at the airport might be viewed as open space, it is not considered useable or visual open space for purposes of community recreation.
<b>Horticultural/ Nursery Areas</b>	There are still a number of privately held nurseries which at this time enjoy a horticultural zoning designation. However, with rising land values, it is doubtful whether these establishments can remain economically viable in light of the pressures to develop these lands. The market values of these properties is forcing them to be recycled to higher and better uses. Since 1975, they have been reduced from 31.1 acres to about nine acres.
<b>Ratio of Open Space to Population</b>	Since Hawthorne is urbanized to a large extent, the backbone of committed open space is the municipal park system. Therefore, open space deficiencies are oftentimes thought of in terms of shortages of park space. Deficiencies in park acreage can be based upon access to park locations or acres of parkland per capita

in the community. Based on both of these criteria the City of Hawthorne is considered to be deficient in open space. Not only that, but local park acreage has actually declined by 11.1 acres since the adoption of the 1973 Open Space Element. Reduction in open space park acreage has occurred largely due to the sell off of school-owned open space (formally used as jointly shared space for public parks) to meet the needs of the school districts.

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) has adopted a standard of providing ten acres of parks and recreation space for each 1,000 persons. Six of these ten acres should be devoted to regional recreation and four acres devoted to local recreation space. Local recreation is divided further into a recommended 2.5 acres for school playgrounds and 1.5 acres for local parks. Based on a population estimate of 63,000, the City should contain approximately 94.5 acres in local parks. With 35.5 acres currently devoted to local parks, this leaves the City with a shortage of 59 acres, based on NRPA standards. In terms of school playgrounds, the City should contain approximately 158 acres, based on NRPA standards. With 50 acres of school playgrounds currently, the City is deficient by approximately 108 acres.

According to NRPA standards, 378 acres of regional recreation are necessary to accommodate the residents of the City. Approximately 220 acres of county parks are currently available, which leaves a need for 158 additional acres. However, some portion of this can be made up by including the local beaches as regional open space.

#### Open Space Distribution

Not only is the City short in providing park acreage, but also the distribution of these parks is inefficient, with no parks being located above 120th Street and only school playgrounds (i.e., hard space), located between Hawthorne Boulevard and Prairie Avenue.

### SECTION III - ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

#### Need

There is a need to provide more recreation open space for the citizens of Hawthorne, especially in view of the tremendous growth in multiple family units within the City over the last two years. Not only should new parks be acquired, but the existing parks need renovating and rehabilitating in order to keep up with user demands. Hawthorne's citizens need increased useable open space for multi-family housing projects as well. Medium and high density residential uses increase the intensity of people in the city. Alleviating overcrowding by providing more open space must be a consideration.

#### Development Pressures

Hawthorne's park and recreation facilities are also being impacted by increasing requests of industrial and commercial entities for use of these spaces. Such firms as TRW, Northrop, Aerospace, Hughes and Xerox consistently request use of the parks for leisure and recreational purposes. This impact on parks has only been generated within the past five years and these demands continue to increase.

In addition, the 13.25 acres of Memorial Park are being underutilized as recreation open space with the City leasing seven acres of this land to Northrop for a parking lot.

#### Opportunities

The following factors have been identified as the major opportunities to be addressed in the Open Space and Recreation Element.

Hawthorne Boulevard Visual Corridor. The vacant lot adjacent to the Civic Center could be devoted to functional open space such as a park or a community garden. And the median strip in the Center of Hawthorne Boulevard which serves an important function in identifying the Boulevard as the major axis through downtown, needs attention. Although the mature trees provide a positive visual image for the City, additional landscaping and irrigation are necessary to maintain the visual quality of the corridor. In conjunction with this upgrading, the City should also address problems associated with the street trees which line the sidewalks along the Boulevard. The existing ficus trees are not maintained, obstruct storefront signage, drop berries on the sidewalk and provide little or no canopy cover to pedestrians.



School District Lands. Recreational open space leased from the school districts has been steadily declining. Most recently, with termination of the Holly Glen Park lease by the Wiseburn School District, the City has lost 4.1 acres of parkland to private residential development. Under Proposition 13, underutilized school property was sold off for financial reasons and the City could simply not afford to purchase these school-owned spaces.

Similar situations exist in Zela Davis, Eucalyptus and Ramona Parks, where the Hawthorne School District owns the property and the Parks and Recreation Department operates facilities on the land. The school district could terminate these agreements at any time and the park open space acreage could be diminished once again. Finding the means to acquire these open space areas should be examined.

County-Owned Facilities. The County has offered to sell Bodger Park to the City, but the City has declined ownership because of lack of funds. At this time, although several proposals have been made, a funding program for park acquisition does not yet exist in the City.

Network Linking Existing Open Space. Not only should the City acquire more permanent park space, but an attempt should be made to create a network linking existing open spaces. This would also help to alleviate the inequities in the distribution of these open spaces.

#### **SECTION IV - OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ELEMENT GOALS AND POLICIES**

The Goals and Policies contained in the Open Space and Recreation Element are concerned with both preserving the existing parks and other recreational opportunities available to the public as well as ensuring that additional open space is acquired to accommodate future needs.

##### **GOAL 1.0: ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A VARIETY OF RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC.**

**POLICY 1.1:** Maintain existing parkland and recreation facilities in good condition in order to protect the public's investment and facilitate uses.

**POLICY 1.2:** The City shall maintain and expand agreements for joint use of school facilities.

**POLICY 1.3:** The City shall negotiate a working agreement with the school districts for acceptable levels of maintenance of school sites.

**POLICY 1.4:** The City shall support the cultural arts and facilities program to enhance the city image and up-grade the level of resident satisfaction in the community.

**POLICY 1.5:** The City shall maintain ongoing program of assessing and providing for open space and recreational needs in multiple family residential zones.

**POLICY 1.6:** The City shall pursue agreements with the Southern California Edison Company, and Southern Pacific Railroad Company, and the Los Angeles County Flood Control District for the establishment of recreation trails, linkages and appropriate uses and landscaping within their respective rights-of-way.

**POLICY 1.7:** The City shall negotiate with the school districts for first right-of-refusal to purchase lands which are now leased or in a joint-powers agreement between the City and the school districts.

**POLICY 1.8:** The City shall assess the need for a grantsperson to investigate available federal and state funding programs for open space and recreation needs.

**POLICY 1.9:** The City shall explore opportunities for utilizing the Hawthorne Parks and Recreation Foundation, a citizen's non-profit organization, in providing capital improvements, facility management and volunteer services.

**POLICY 1.10:** The City shall require residential developers to pay a fee or dedicate parkland.

**POLICY 1.11:** The City shall consider open space needs in any future annexation.

**POLICY 1.12:** The City shall assess feasibility and development of a city-wide bicycle trail system which should be tied into regional paths.

**POLICY 1.13:** The City shall review and update the City's Master Plan for street trees.

**POLICY 1.14:** The City shall create a specific plan for Hawthorne Boulevard streetscape improvements, and a green streets/corridors plan.

**POLICY 1.15:** The City shall establish and maintain a five-year park enhancement plan for ongoing budgeting of funds for park and recreation facility capital improvements, operations and maintenance.

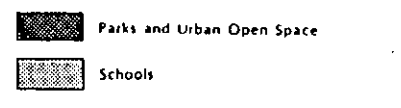
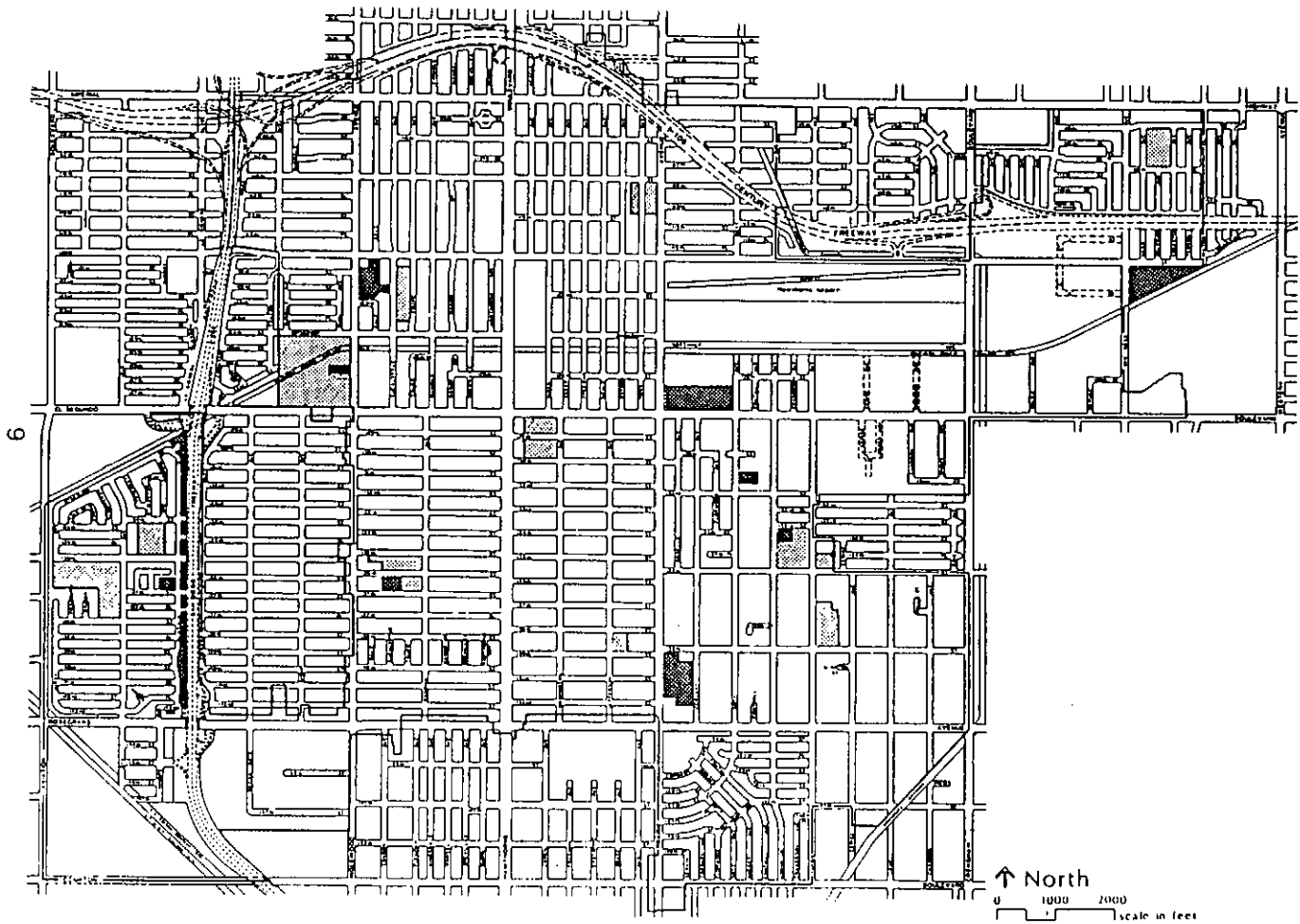


Figure 1  
Open Space/Recreation  
Map

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