

## Create more urban Open Space

### *-Consider the Effects of Today's Decisions on Future Generations-*

The values provided by, and the means of protecting, the wide variety of lands encompassed by the term "open space" are very sweeping. It cleans the water we drink, recharges our aquifers, prevents storm damage and recycles the air we breathe. It's the trails we jog and walk and bicycle, it's the place where we take our family and friends, and it's the scenery we see on the way. Even without considering the related benefits of open space, it's often cheaper for a community to acquire open space than it is to carry the cost of services for the developed residential land over the long term.

As development pressures mount it can irreversibly alter the long term economic and social character of our communities. Adequate natural and developed open space as well as recreational facilities are not merely desirable, but are essential in the overall well being of a community. It helps to retain the desirability and attractiveness of your community to attract new residents and businesses over the long term and retain your Quality of Life. A well-managed system that provides active and passive recreational opportunities is considered an indispensable community feature. Open space softens the visual image of the built environment, and generally provides for an aesthetically pleasing community. It can also serve as a buffer between uses of significantly differing function and intensity. Encourage land developers participation in the provisions of public parks where new population bases are created as a result of their development plan.

### *What you can do:*

Encourage the conservation of significant natural resources and urban open space in growth areas. Communities could implement zoning ordinances to preserve open space in a number of ways: use overlay zoning, design guidelines, incentive zoning, direct purchase, purchase of development rights with a conservation easement, and other means to protect open space from development also include the following:

1. Preserve meaningful open space with a commitment to promoting acquisition, dedication, and setting aside open space as a community amenity. A national service standard for a neighborhood park is six acres for every 1000 people.
2. Inventory and evaluate significant natural areas that are historically, ecologically or scientifically unique, outstanding or important to be preserved as open space.
3. Encourage a less sprawling and more efficient form of development that consumes less open land and conforms to existing topography and natural features.
4. Increase the amount of Open Space required in new subdivisions.
5. Zoning laws that allow cluster zoning to leave more open space in their midst have proved to be effective.
6. Transfer of Development Rights, or TDRs, preserve open space by transferring development rights away from sensitive open space areas. For example, to protect ridgelines, washes, and floodplain.

7. Another tool is to use a density bonus to encourage developers to increase floor-to-area ratio. The basic premise is that a developer is granted the opportunity to increase the size of the building beyond that which is allowed by zoning, in exchange for providing a public amenity from which the community can benefit. The level of bonus is designed to cover the cost of providing the amenity.
8. Since residential development doesn't pay its way. The State has a tool called the *Fiscal Impact Illustrator* that compares the public costs and revenues associated with alternative land uses to determine the fiscal impact of development on local government budgets.  
<http://www.planning.utah.gov/fiscalimpactshome.htm>
9. Improve the development review process and development design standards so that developers are encouraged to apply principles above.

There are innovative financing tools to facilitate open space acquisition and preservation. For example:

- Levy a local tax - Boulder Co passes a sales tax of 0.4% and raised a \$100 million to buy land.
  - Sales tax
  - Impact fee, for example In January 2007, the City of Hurricane raised their Impact Fee for Parks and Recreation to \$6,186.
  - Collect a fee from motor vehicle or license plates
  - Apply for Land and Water Conservation Funds ([http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=21360](http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21360)) that provide Federal Funds for local governments to buy outdoor recreation areas. In 2003, St George received \$196,000 and Santa Clara \$90,000 for recreational facilities. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was established by Congress in 1965. The Act designated that a portion of receipts from offshore oil and gas leases be placed into a fund annually for state and local conservation, as well as for the protection of our national treasures (parks, forest and wildlife areas).
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