

CITY OF SANTA MONICA

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# Open Space Element



ROMA DESIGN GROUP

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March 1997



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# Addendum to Open Space Element

Changes made to the Draft Open Space Element for incorporation  
in the Final Open Space Element

## Forward

Added language provided by the Environmental Task Force, at the direction of the Planning Commission:

### *Forward: Santa Monica, A Sustainable Community*

*"Thoughtfully planned open space is a key ingredient of a pleasant and functional urban design, connects us to our bioregion's natural and human history, and in addition forms the 'green matrix' that is essential to the health, livability, and sustainability of Santa Monica. Parks and open spaces provide vital opportunities for recreation, relaxation, and contemplation, as well as habitat for plants and animals who are integral parts of our local ecosystem. In addition, our city's open spaces produce 'nature's services' critical to Santa Monica residents, as trees and other greenery absorb pollutants, divert storm water, and provide cooling shade, thus reducing energy consumption. Although the City is already heavily urbanized, many possibilities exist to restore natural ecosystem functioning, bring native plants and wildlife back into town, and enhance the ability of the city's green matrix to provide nature's services. This Open Space Element provides a flexible blueprint for accomplishing these goals, through, for example, street redesign and greening, restoration of hydrological functioning for some creeks and streams, creation of small-scale wildlife corridors, and major additions to the city's urban forest. The Element promotes the construction of additional spaces for active recreation and leisure where they are most needed, a means for linking the city's open spaces for easy and safe pedestrian and bicycle travel, and public art that at once educates residents about both the urban nature now lost to us, and the nature that is still within our powers to reclaim and restore for future generations of Santa Monicans."*

Jennifer Wolch

Professor of Geography

Co-Director Sustainable Cities Program

University of Southern California

## 1. Page 24 – Policy 1.5

Delete the second sentence and modify the third sentence as follows:

(Note: New text in italics, deleted text in strikethrough)

*"In addition, For example,* the potential to increase the use of Bergamot Station for public gatherings is appropriate given the arts and cultural orientation that has developed there."

## 2. Page 25 – Policy 2.1

Delete existing policy and replace with:

*"Nonaviation lands at the Municipal Airport are planned for conversion to open space, including streetscape improvements to Airport Avenue, playfields, picnic areas, and an off-leash dog area."*

3. Page 39

Delete sentence 4 of paragraph 2.

4. Pages 39 and 40 – under *Public Private Partnerships*.

Revise as follows:

Cooperation between the City, Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District and Santa Monica College will be key to expanding the park and recreational facilities in the City. Development of school-parks at the neighborhood schools, the Municipal Pool and a public gathering place ~~near the Santa Monica College (the Campus Promenade on Pearl Street)~~ *in the form of a pedestrian promenade (location to be determined)* are key proposals that will require cooperative agreements related to improvements, operations and maintenance, as well as significant involvement of school communities and neighbors.

5. Page 40 – Table 2

A. Revise “Parks” Section of Table 2 as follows:

<b>Parks</b>	<b>Acreage</b>
<i>Airport Park (non-aviation land)</i>	8.3
Virginia Avenue Park Expansion	3.7
Civic Center	13.2-15.4
School Parks	8.0
<i>Euclid Street Park</i>	0.4
New Parkland Acquisition	5.0
City Yards	1.0
Subtotal Parks	38.6-40.8

B. Delete “Campus” Promenade under **Public Gathering Places** and add “Pedestrian” Promenade.

C. Revise **Total** acres from 34.4-63.6 to 44.9-47.1.

D. Revise footnote 3 at the bottom of Table 2 to read:

E. “Assumes purchase of *a minimum of five acres of land.*”

6. Page 39 – second column, first paragraph

Change numeric totals of added parks and open space acreages to reflect new chart total.

General Revisions

1. Remove all references to “DRAFT – March 1997.”
2. Change all “Lincoln” Park references to “Reed” Park.

Errata – Table of Contents

1. Page i – add “c” to Open Spae Traditions.

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# Summary of Objectives and Policies

## **Objective 1: Develop and maintain a diversified and balanced system of high-quality open space.**

Policy 1.1: Preserve existing public open space.

Policy 1.2: Reinforce individual identities in each of the City's parks.

Policy 1.3: Acquire and develop new public open space throughout the City, giving priority to accessible locations within the geographic heart of the community.

Policy 1.4: Provide opportunities for the enjoyment of open space within every Santa Monica neighborhood.

Policy 1.5: Expand public gathering places within the City.

## **Objective 2: Expand the open space system through use of public properties.**

Policy 2.1: Reuse portions of public lands.

Policy 2.2: Expand open space role through shared use of certain facilities

Policy 2.3: Improve school sites as public open space

Policy 2.3: Reclaim excessively wide streets within the City.

Policy 2.4: Encourage open space and recreational use of alleys and street ends.

Policy 2.5: Transform surface parking lots.

Policy 2.6: Consider the development of freeway parks

## **Objective 3: Establish a system of linked central parks.**

Policy 3.1: Expand and develop the open space role of the Civic Center.

Policy 3.2: Redefine the open space role of Memorial Park and improve its connection with Woodlawn Cemetery and Santa Monica College.

Policy 3.3: Provide linkages between Stewart Street Park and Bergamot Station.

## **Objective 4: Establish a citywide system of pathways and linear open spaces.**

Policy 4.1: "Green" neighborhood streets.

Policy 4.2: Utilize streets to form open space

linkages within the City.

Policy 4.3: Enhance the MTA corridor as a bicycle lane and linear open space

**Objective 5 Establish stronger connections to regional open spaces.**

Policy 5.1 Reconnect the City and the beach.

Policy 5.2: Develop new beach parks.

Policy 5.3: Strengthen connections to the mountains.

**Objective 6: Reinforce the underlying physiographic structure of the City.**

Policy 6.1: Restore stream corridors, wherever feasible.

Policy 6.2: Emphasize ridgetop parks and open space.

Policy 6.3: Protect the Santa Monica bluffs.

Policy 6.4: Extend Palisades Park.

**Objective 7: Clarify City form and structure.**

Policy 7.1: Strengthen City edges.

Policy 7.2: Develop distinctive community entries.

Policy 7.3: Mark key transitions in city structure.

Policy 7.4: Create focal points at significant places in the City.

**Objective 8: Heighten the sense of nature in the City.**

Policy 8.1: Maintain and expand the community forest.

Policy 8.2: Develop a "freeway forest."

Policy 8.3: Promote biodiversity in and expand city gardens.

Policy 8.4: Develop new community gardens.

Policy 8.5: Introduce water in city open spaces.

**Objective 9: Increase the accessibility of open space.**

Policy 9.1: Increase physical access to parks and open spaces, in particular for youth and persons with disabilities.

Policy 9.2: Increase the visibility of the parks.

Policy 9.3: Provide appropriate signage for orientation and interpretative purposes.

Policy 9.4: Protect solar access in public space.

**Objective 10: Incorporate art and cultural events in public places.**

Policy 10.1: Integrate public art into park design.

Policy 10.2: Encourage temporary visual art installations in parks and other open spaces.

Policy 10.3: Provide open space venues for small, informal cultural events.

# Introduction

The purpose of this element is to establish a long-range vision for the future development of parks and open spaces within the City of Santa Monica. It represents the first time in more than twenty years that planning for open space resources has been undertaken comprehensively and in consideration of the City as a whole. It embraces a far-reaching reconception of the City in relation to its open spaces –including not only the City’s parks, gardens, greens and beaches, but also its tree-lined streets and public gathering places.

This element is directed toward improving the character and quality of the City’s existing open spaces, and adding to its future inventory through reuse of public lands, redefinition of streets and transportation corridors and acquisition of private parcels in key locations. The intention is to create a meaningful and diverse system – ranging from undeveloped natural areas to carefully designed urban parks and linear pathways closely tied to enhancement of the community forest. The focus is on reinforcing the social, environmental, cultural and recreational role of open space within the City.

The Open Space Element represents a milestone for the City, creating a needed framework to help guide public policy decisions in the future. It has been drafted in response to a

growing awareness of the importance of open space and park planning and has been shaped by extensive community outreach and the involvement of thousands of residents. The element further builds on the open space identity of Santa Monica and its potential to contribute to future livability. There are few places as well suited to the enjoyment of the outdoors in the course of everyday life as Santa Monica. The mild climate, stunning seaside location and landscaped public spaces give the community its distinctive character and quality of life.

Despite the attractiveness of its setting, there are a number of issues that affect open space in the future. Compared to many other coastal cities, there is a scarcity of open space. With the exception of the beach, existing open spaces are predominantly the same size, and they are not well distributed within the City. Because there is an undersupply and lack of clear hierarchy in role and function, there has been a tendency to overbuild facilities in parks. The open spaces within the City work as separate domains and are not well linked into a larger integral system.

How can these issues be addressed in a city that is fully developed and built to its very edges? The answer lies in redefining the nature of open space in an intensely urbanized community. The approach in this Open Space Element



*A community open house began the public outreach effort (above). SAMOHI interns (below) meeting to discuss student input.*

emphasizes the preservation and enhancement of existing open spaces, the recycling of leftover or underutilized spaces, and the transformation of land to better serve open space functions. In this way, the element seeks to build on opportunities to reshape urban lands, provide measurable boundaries, and connect elements in a meaningful way.

## Planning Process

Planning for the Open Space Element and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan was initiated by the City Council in the Fall of 1995. It began with an inventory of existing open spaces, public schools, cultural opportunities, recreation

programs, recreational organizations and facility use. The first phase report, published in February 1996, documents existing conditions. A second report—the Conceptual Framework—was completed in June 1996 and provides preliminary directions based upon community input.

An understanding of community values with respect to open space was gained from an extensive outreach program. This program involved over 3,000 residents and was aimed at identifying how the community uses open space today, and where priorities might be placed in influencing decisions about open space in the future. In eliciting input from the community, a number of different activities were staged, including:

- Two Community Open Houses, attended by more than 100 residents to gather information concerning parks, open space and recreation facilities and programs and to identify any vision statements for parks and open space from the Santa Monica community.
- A telephone survey of randomly selected Santa Monica residents. The survey consisted of 33 closed and open-ended questions, designed to reach a representative cross-section of the Santa Monica community. The sample of 781 surveys was reduced to a final size of 685 respondents to ensure that the survey accurately reflected the demographic characteristics of Santa Monica residents.
- Distribution of 25 workshop kits that enabled community leaders to hold additional workshops. These community-based events were conducted by a range of groups including neighborhood associations, school PTA's and participants of recreation programs.
- A Santa Monica High School internship program, which involved five students who

developed and administered a two-page questionnaire which was distributed to roughly 3,100 students in both English and Spanish to solicit student views on top priority recreation and open space programs and activities.

- Distribution of a children and youth activity packet to obtain ideas from elementary and middle school students. Approximately 370 K-6 grade students wrote and/or created artwork about Santa Monica parks, open space and recreation; about 230 students in grades K-8 completed a survey identifying participation in a variety of recreational activities; and approximately 330 K-8 students were involved in a survey to identify their three top priority activities.
- A park user survey that profiled users of the City's 24 public parks. About 100 people were interviewed as part of the user profile.

## Community Voices

The results of the community outreach phase of work form the basis for the recommendations included in this Open Space Element as well as the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Key findings of the telephone and youth surveys are summarized as follows:

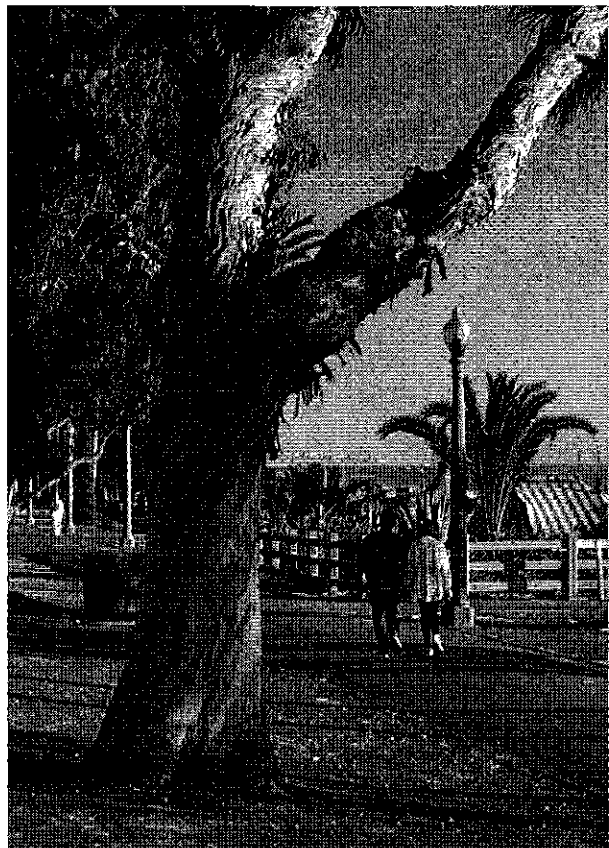
*Park Usage.* Residents of Santa Monica are active and frequent users of the City's public open spaces and parks. On average, a member of a household visited parks and recreation facilities nearly twice weekly. Ninety-three percent of households with children were park users.

*Most Popular Parks.* Palisades Park, Lincoln Park, Clover Park and Douglas Parks were identified as the parks most used; however there are differences in preference by age group. Santa Monica High School students tended to favor the more active recreation

parks, specifically Clover, Memorial and Marine over Palisades Park. Clover and Douglas Park users were found to be more likely to be groups with children while Palisades Park users were more likely to be aged 65 years and over.

*Most Popular Open Spaces.* Third Street Promenade, the Beach and the Pier are the most used public open spaces in the City and this finding holds true for every age group.

*Recreational Activity Preference.* Walking was the most popular outdoor recreational activity of Santa Monica residents. Other favorite pastimes include bicycling, shopping, eating out, running/jogging and playing tennis. The results of the youth surveys revealed somewhat different leisure time preferences - while high school students also rated walking



*Walking is the recreational activity of choice in Santa Monica.*

highly, they showed strong involvement in more active recreational activities, such as swimming, playing basketball, bicycling and skating, as well as social activities – the most popular leisure activity among this age group was identified as “hanging out” followed by eating, general socializing and shopping.

When asked to identify their favorite park activities, both high school and elementary school students favored baseball, basketball, soccer and football. Visiting the Third Street Promenade, the beach, the Pier and playing roller hockey/skateboarding/skating were identified as the most popular open space and pathway activities among Santa Monica’s youth.

*Community Priorities.* Improving existing parks and recreational facilities was identified by respondents as the top priority by Santa Monica residents; in particular, improvements which address park safety and homeless issues. More than one-third of all respondents described one of these two issues when asked to describe their most desired park improvement.

Developing more pedestrian-oriented streets and open spaces was second – this finding goes hand-in-hand with the popularity of walking and socializing as top leisure pursuits for all age



*Third Street Promenade is the most popular open space in Santa Monica.*

groups. Developing new parks and open space was the third priority followed by development of more plazas and public gathering places. There was very strong support for the school/park concept, and the use of school facilities for additional recreational programs. Finally, a majority of respondents expressed willingness to pay for improvements to parks, open spaces and recreation facilities.

## Relationship to State Law

The Open Space Element of the General Plan sets forth a plan for the protection and enhancement of open space resources and uses in the City of Santa Monica. State planning law defines “open space” as any area of land or water which is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open space use as defined in this section, and which is designated on a local, regional or state open space plan as any of the following:

Open space for the preservation of natural resources, including, but not limited to, areas required for the preservation of plant and animal life, including habitat for fish and wildlife species; areas required for ecological and other scientific study purposes; rivers, streams, bays and estuaries; and coastal beaches, lake shores, banks of rivers and streams, and watershed lands.

Open space used for the managed production of resources, including, but not limited to, forest lands and areas of economic importance for the production of food or fiber; areas required for recharge of groundwater basins; bays, estuaries, marshes, rivers and streams that are important for the management of commercial fisheries; and areas containing major mineral deposits, including those in short supply.



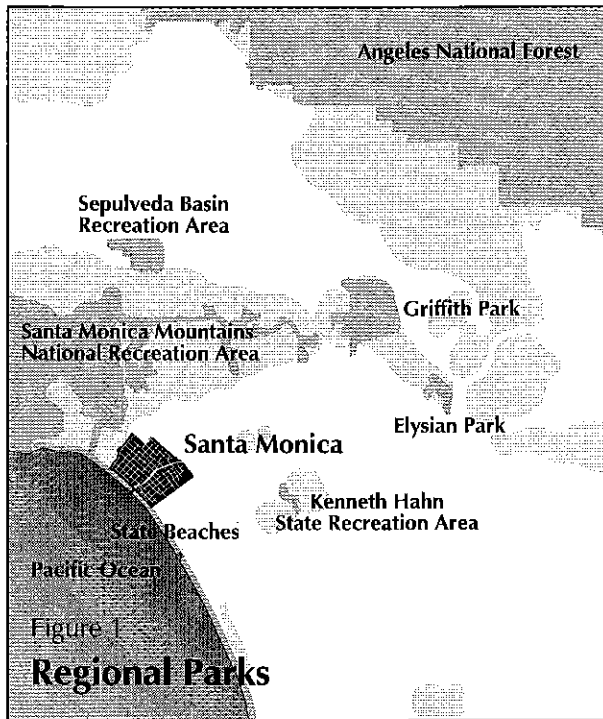
*Palisades Park is the favorite park of Santa Monicans.*

Open space for outdoor recreation, including, but not limited to, areas of outstanding scenic, historic and cultural value; areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, including access to lake shores, beaches, and rivers and streams; and areas which serve as links between major recreation and open space reservations, including utility easements, banks of rivers and streams, trails and scenic highway corridors.

Open space for public health and safety, including, but not limited to, areas which require special management or regulation because of hazardous or special conditions such as earthquake fault zones, unstable soil areas, floodplains, watersheds, areas presenting high fire risks, areas required for the protection of water quality and water reservoirs, and areas required for the protection and enhancement of air quality.

## Relationship to other Planning Documents

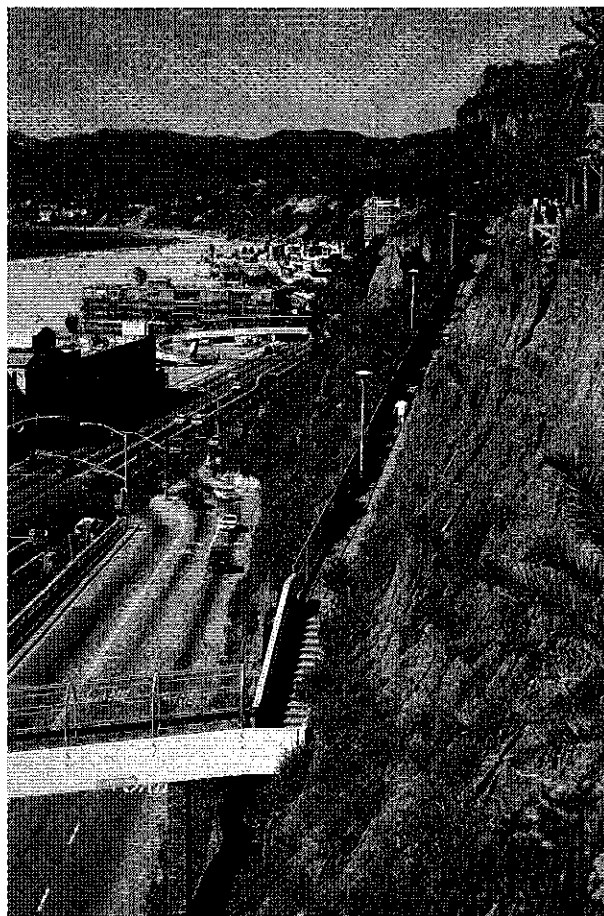
As indicated in Table 1, most of the open spaces in Santa Monica would fall into the category of open space for purposes of outdoor recreation. As an urban community in a setting of mild year-round climate, Santa Monicans enjoy the out-of-doors in many ways—walking along tree-lined streets; socializing within urban gardens, parks, plazas and community gathering places; playing roller hockey and skateboarding; as well as using the more traditional parks, sports fields and natural open areas. Accordingly, this Open Space Element recognizes that there are many elements of the City's urban fabric that serve important open space functions and need to be brought together into a larger open space system that meets the needs of the community.



The Open Space Element provides broad policy direction to guide decisions in the future. More specific focus on recreation and parks is provided within the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which was prepared concurrently with the element and is the first to be completed in Santa Monica's history. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan implements the policy directions of the Open Space Element through a number of recommendations for specific improvements to parks and recreational facilities. As the companion document to the Open Space Element, the Master Plan takes a somewhat different perspective, focusing more specifically on activities and facilities than on the land, its patterns and the role that open space can play in shaping meaningful places in the context of the City.

In addition to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, there are a number of other related and relevant planning documents affecting open space within the City. The Civic Center Specific Plan, adopted in 1993, advanced the notion that streets are valuable public open spaces that can be designed to effectively serve multiple roles, not just accommodate auto movement.

The Downtown Streetscape Master Plan, which is nearing completion, is intended to improve all of the streets in the 35-block downtown area and enhance their role and appearance as pedestrian-oriented public spaces, adding or replacing more than 1,000 trees to the community forest. The Pico Boulevard streetscape project is also underway, with plans to replace nearly 300 trees and add an additional 200 along the entire length of the street. Finally, the Land Use and Circulation Elements of the General Plan as well as the Bicycle Master Plan, the Sustainable Cities Report, and the Cultural Arts Master Plan are documents that are also closely tied to the Open Space Element and have helped guide its formulation.



*The Palisades rise 100 feet above the ocean.*



As a part of this planning effort, a feasibility study for the nonaviation land use at the Santa Monica Municipal Airport is currently underway. This study will identify the feasibility of open space and recreational use on the largest single opportunity site for open space within the City. Alternatives that have been developed range from a modest amount of land to 25 acres of open space. The findings and recommendations of this planning process will be incorporated into the final Open Space Element.

## The Physiography of Santa Monica

Santa Monica occupies a central position along the arcing shoreline of Santa Monica Bay (Figure 1). The beach, which has grown through accretion, is several hundred feet wide—one of the widest stretches of beach in this part of southern California. The Santa Monica beach is a significant open space resource, comprising more than 50 percent of the open space lands in the City. At the same time, it forms a part of a much larger system of open space—the state-owned beaches that continue uninterrupted up and down the coast.

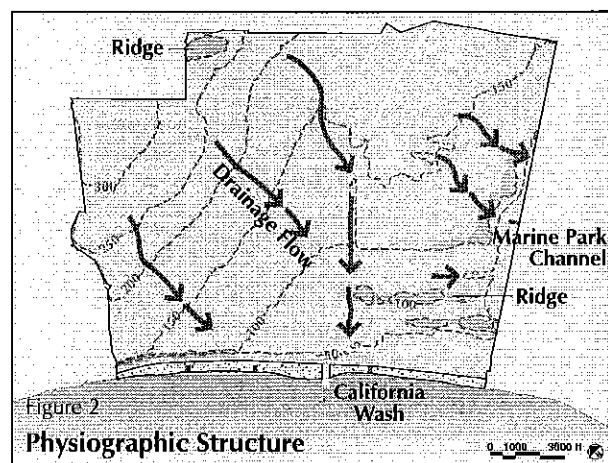
To the north of the City, the Santa Monica Mountains are another regional open space resource that established a strong context for the City. The mountain range, which is today within federal ownership, represents a major unbroken land mass comprising over 70,000 acres of publicly held lands (Figure 2).

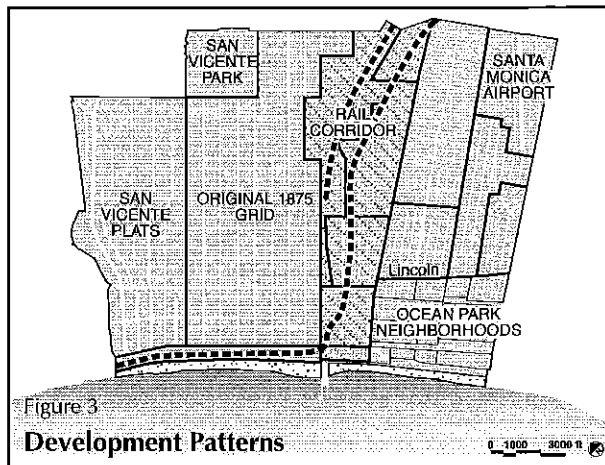
Within this open space setting of mountains and beaches, Santa Monica sits atop a coastal plain that is defined on its northern boundary by Santa Monica Canyon. This deep arroyo attracted native American settlements and then the area's first European settlement in the 1860s—a summer colony for residents of the new City of Los Angeles some twelve miles inland along the

foot of the mountains. South of the canyon, the rugged terrain gives way to the gently south sloping upland of the City's north side. The land descends to a historic drainage channel that ran west to the sea along the general line of the present-day Santa Monica Freeway. As can be seen in Figure 2, the drainage formed a distinctive draw that originally marked the edge of the Palisades and defined the City's southerly boundary. It is the collision of this south sloping upland with the southwesterly trending coastline that creates the City's most memorable topographic feature—the Palisades—a sheer cliff of fragile sandstone that rises about 100 feet above the coast and separates the northern portion of the City from the beach below.

The topography of the City's south side is considerably more complex. The broad upland occupied by the Sunset Park neighborhood rolls off gradually to the east and descends to the west into a series of parallel ridges that roll gently down to the Ocean Park beach. To the south, it drops towards the historic coastal wetland of Ballona Creek. The landscape at the center of the City reflects the historic patterns created by water as it flowed from inland areas to the bay.

The physiographic character of Santa Monica reveals itself in the form of the City and its pattern of development today (see Figure 3,

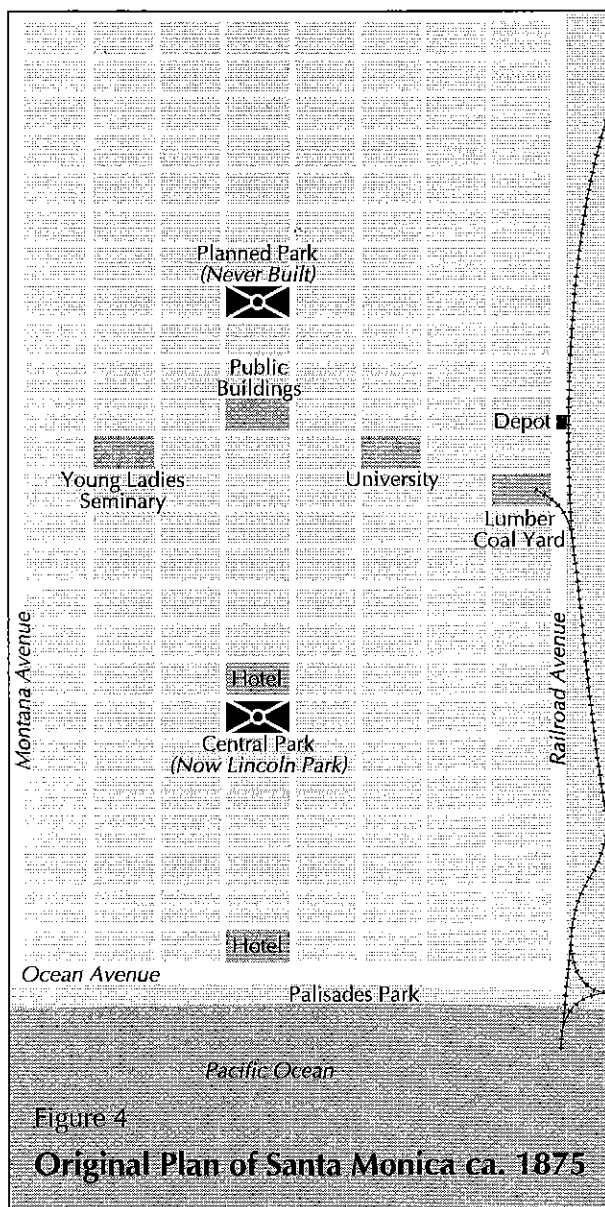




Development Patterns). The lines of the historic drainage can be discerned in the partition of the City into two halves and the space now occupied by the freeway. The finer grain of blocks within Ocean Park directly relates to the heterogeneous terrain, with its greater complexity of intermittent ridges and slopes (Figure 3). The edge of Santa Monica Canyon is legible in the broad sweeping movement of San Vicente and the block patterns in the northern edges of the City. The flat coastal plain is manifested in the regular and extensive grid pattern that comprises much of the City. While the structure of the underlying landscape may be subtle, it is actually present in the form of Santa Monica and in the everyday experiences of moving through the streets of the City.

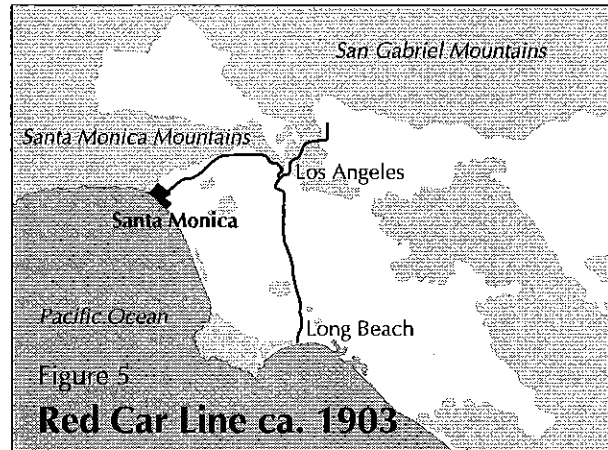
## Open Space Traditions

In its early years, Santa Monica was a coastal village nestled in open space. The town originally was laid out at the edge of the Palisades, with 8 blocks extending from Montana Avenue to Colorado Boulevard and 25 blocks inland (Figure 4). By the late 1800s, the town was largely platted and a grid of tree-lined streets stretched across the landscape. Development, however, remained concentrated at land's end near the rail depot, filling out vacant blocks to the east over the next half century. Early images of the town show extensive tree planting along the new streets which were platted into the orange groves to the east, ultimately to connect with the grid reaching across to the west. The thriving metropolis of Los Angeles was miles away, across fields, ranchos and wild lands. Interposed between broad open lands and the expansive bay, Santa Monica seemed unconstrained, with unlimited supply of land and access to open space resources.



In many ways, Santa Monica was a garden paradise. The temperate climate and ocean breezes, sandy beaches and backdrop mosaic of vegetated hills and rocky peaks made the entire community appear as a park for residents arriving from the more developed communities in Los Angeles and environs. Very naturally, Santa Monica became an attractive resort destination, with a variety of amusements and recreational attractions clustered at the shore. Beach cottages were developed on small lots inland, and many parcels in the inland portions of the City were left vacant up until the 1930s, when the City underwent a huge increase in population. Rail at the southern boundary of the City and the Red Car line on the north along San Vicente Boulevard spanned the long distances and open territory between Los Angeles and Santa Monica, bringing visitors to the beach and new residents to the town (Figure 5).

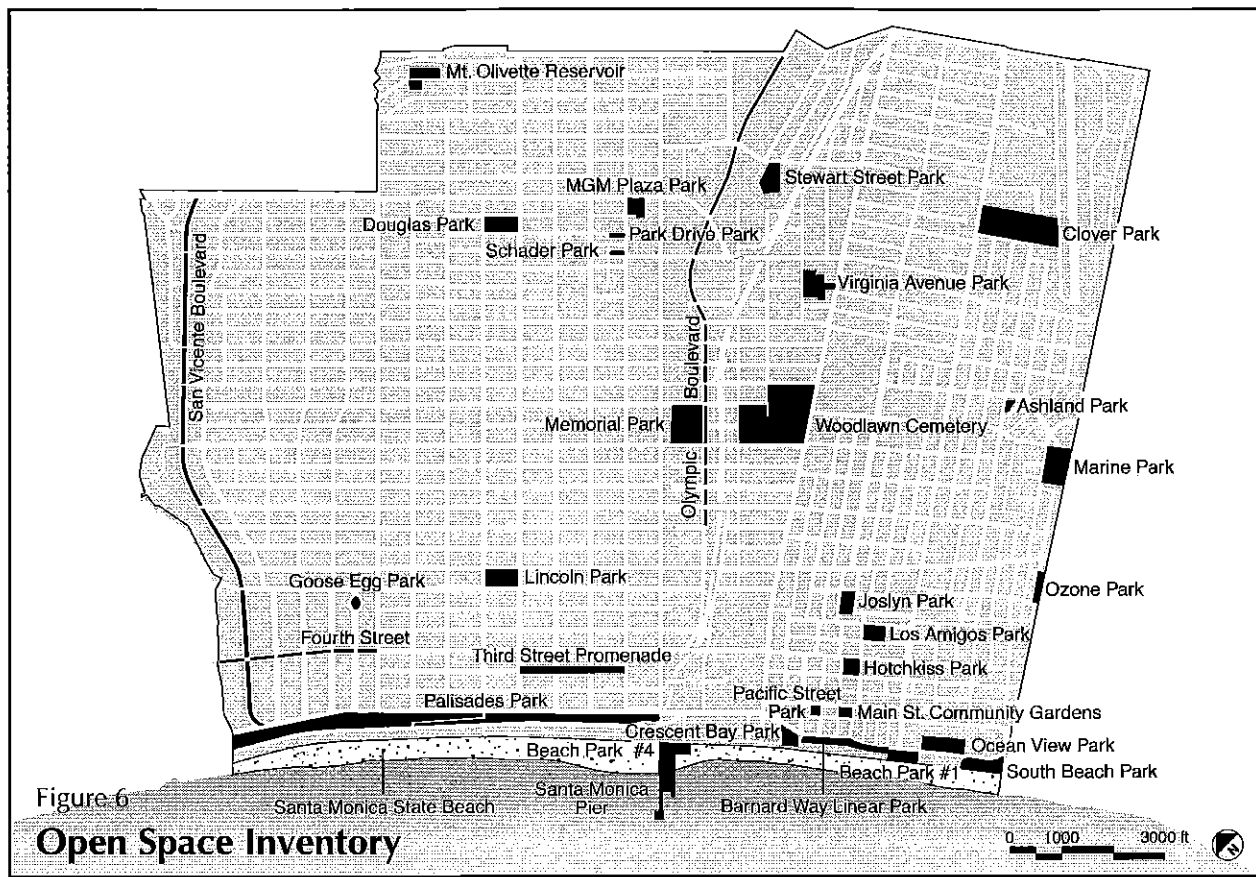
Santa Monica quickly gained identity as a resort community—"where the mountains meet the sea." However, when Senator John P. Jones founded the town of Santa Monica, he envisioned it as a more than a resort at the beach. He grasped the value of its strategic location within the region and developed a blueprint for the future of the community that would serve as a framework for growth for decades to come. Parks played an important role in this early plan, and were intended to give amenity and civility to the community. These were not large assemblages of open land, but a tamed landscape of manicured lawns, pathways, and places to sit and stroll. The largest park was the Palisades—at some 26 acres still the largest park within the City—a broad greensward running along the top of the promontory overlooking the bay and ocean beyond. This park not only provided a spectacular place to walk and to view the water, but at the same time served to protect the fragile sandstone bluff from further erosion. Inland, an entire city block



was set aside for Central Park (now Lincoln Park), with formal walks on the diagonal leading to a circular space in the center (Figure 4).

Central Park was clearly planned as a prototype for other parks that would punctuate the urban fabric as growth occurred to the east. In the successive growth of the City, another five-acre park was envisioned along Wilshire between 18th and 19th streets, but it was never built. Later, Douglas Park was built on Wilshire between 24th and 25th in the tradition begun by Central Park, marking the grid with a green rectangle in place of urbanized development. However, this tradition was subsequently abandoned. In place of a planned composition of urban squares tied to major boulevards, by the beginning of the twentieth century, Santa Monica began to develop its parks opportunistically as circumstances allowed.

South of the railroad tracks, the nearby community of Ocean Park had long followed a more opportunistic model. Here, a different type of community came into being, reflecting the very different characteristics of the terrain. In contrast to the undifferentiated block pattern that characterized the lands to the north, in Ocean Park, a somewhat smaller, rectilinear grid was built in a more random fashion, with eccentric junctures and discontinuities. The broad length of blocks did not face the water, as did the



blocks to the north. Rather, they were turned on their sides, with the short end toward the water. In this way, a greater number of openings and access points to the beach were created. Instead of one grand park along and above the beach, a number of smaller parks were incrementally developed along the high ground, several blocks east of the water's edge, overlooking the beach.

## Open Space Today

Santa Monica today has 419 acres of open space, which occupies approximately eight percent of the total land within the City (Table 1). Most of its open space (nearly 60 percent) is undeveloped and is concentrated at the beach on 245 acres of land. In addition, there are twenty-four city parks, amounting to approximately 113 acres (or about 27% of the

City's open spaces). The remaining open spaces include public gathering places – in particular, the Santa Monica Pier at the foot of Colorado Avenue, and the Third Street Promenade, extending from Wilshire Boulevard to Broadway within the heart of downtown; the “green streets”, previous Red Car lines, now notable for their broad (36-foot wide) medians; community gardens; and public lands which primarily serve other functions, but which are also significant open spaces – including Mt. Olivette water reservoir and the Woodlawn Cemetery.

Most of the Santa Monica's open spaces are located in the western portion of the City (Figure 6). About 75% of the City's open spaces are concentrated within seven blocks of the bay, and these include the beach to the north and south of the Pier, Palisades Park, and Lincoln Park as well as the numerous beach parks and neighborhood parks within Ocean Park.

In relative terms, the amount of open space in Santa Monica is fairly low. This shortage within the City has placed increased pressure on existing parks to satisfy recreational needs and has diminished the sense of open space. As a result, parks and schools that were once predominantly open and landscaped have been filled over time with specialized facilities (tennis courts, playgrounds and community structures, as well as parking lots). As an example, in the early days of Lincoln Park, the entire five acres of park were open and landscaped, whereas today nearly 60 to 70 percent of the site supports buildings, tennis courts, and other recreational facilities.

### **The Influence of Density**

Santa Monica is a unique community within California because of its high density. Most California cities of similar geographic size have much smaller populations. For instance, Santa Barbara has a comparable number of residents, but with half the density and more than three times the amount of open space. With a density of over 10,000 people per square mile, Santa Monica is more akin to a big city than it is many other California coastal towns.

The implications of density on open space are profound. Typically, the greater the density, the less the amount of public open space within the

City as a whole. Higher density also implies a lesser degree of private open space for residents as well. In Santa Monica, 75 percent of residents live in multifamily housing without private backyards and gardens. Furthermore, even the single-family neighborhoods are relatively dense by suburban California standards. The average lot size is on the order of 5,000 square feet, which is more commonplace in older residential communities than it is in the postwar developments, which averaged 6,000 to 7,000 square feet in size.

### **Parks versus Open Space**

Of the open space in Santa Monica today, a significant proportion is undeveloped. Typically, the undeveloped open spaces in cities comprise some 20 percent of the total, rather than the majority, as do the beaches in Santa Monica. The large amount of open space at the beach contrasts with the shortage of parkland in the inland portions of the City, particularly to the east of Lincoln Boulevard.

The park system in Santa Monica also lacks a strong hierarchical structure. Although each park plays a specific role in the community, they are only slightly differentiated by size. For example, Palisades Park is the single largest park in the City and attracts visitors from throughout the



*Aerial view of Lincoln Park.*



*Santa Monica State Beach comprises 60 percent of the open space within the City*

## Existing Open Space Use

Area	Acres	Percent of Total Area	Preservation of Natural Resources				Outdoor Recreation				Public Health and Safety			
			Wildlife Habitats	Plant Life Habitats	Bays	Coastal Beaches	Scenic Value	Historic Value	Cultural Value	Park, Recreation Purposes	Access to Beaches	Scenic Highway Corridors	Unstable soil areas	Water Reservoirs
<b>Beaches</b>														
Santa Monica State Beach:														
1921 Tide-Line to Berm	128.70		•			•	•	•		•		•		
Berm to Mean Water Line	80.00		•			•	•	•		•		•		
Beach Parking Lots	36.80										•			
<i>Subtotal Beaches</i>	<i>245.50</i>	<i>59%</i>												
<b>Parks</b>														
Ashland Park	0.36									•				
Barnard Way Linear Park	3.22					•	•			•	•	•		
Beach Park #1	4.60					•	•		•	•	•			
Beach Park #4	0.13					•	•			•	•			
Clover Park	17.85									•				
Crescent Bay Park	2.27					•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Douglas Park	4.48							•		•				
Goose Egg Park	0.69									•				
Hotchkiss Park	2.07						•		•	•				
Joslyn Park	2.50						•	•	•	•				
Lincoln Park	5.27							•	•	•				
Los Amigos Park	3.14									•				
Marine Park	6.99								•	•				
Memorial Park	10.42								•	•				
MGM Plaza Park	3.50									•				
Ocean View Park	5.66					•	•			•	•			
Ozone Park	0.72									•				
Pacific Street Park	0.42									•				
Palisades Park	26.41			•			•	•	•	•	•		•	
Park Drive Park	0.34									•				
Schader Park	0.16									•				
South Beach Park	1.75					•	•			•	•			

## Existing Open Space Use

Area	Acres	Percent of Total Area	Preservation of Natural Resources				Outdoor Recreation				Public Health and Safety			
			Wildlife Habitats	Plant Life Habitats	Bays	Coastal Beaches	Scenic Value	Historic Value	Cultural Value	Park, Recreation Purposes	Access to Beaches	Scenic Highway Corridors	Unstable soil areas	Water Reservoirs
Stewart Street Park	3.82									•				
Virginia Avenue Park	5.82									•				
<b>Subtotal Parks</b>	<b>112.59</b>	<b>27%</b>												
<b>Public Gathering Places</b>														
Santa Monica Pier	8.50						•	•	•	•				
Third Street Promenade	2.40								•					
<b>Subtotal Public Gathering Places</b>	<b>10.90</b>	<b>3%</b>												
<b>Green Streets</b>														
San Vicente Boulevard	8.74									•		•		
Olympic Boulevard	6.53									•		•		
Fourth Street	1.35											•		
<b>Subtotal Green Streets</b>	<b>16.62</b>	<b>4%</b>												
<b>Gardens</b>														
Main Street Community Garden	0.50									•				
Park Drive Community Garden										•				
Civic Center Demo. Garden	0.31						•		•					
Ocean Park Blvd. Demo. Garden	0.55						•		•					
<b>Subtotal Community Garden</b>	<b>1.36</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>												
<b>Other Public Lands</b>														
Mount Olivette Reservoir	2.37						•							•
Woodlawn Cemetery	30.00							•	•					
<b>Subtotal Other Public Lands</b>	<b>32.37</b>	<b>8%</b>												
<b>Total Open Space</b>	<b>419.34</b>	<b>100%</b>												

City and region, yet is still relatively small. According to commonly used park classifications, large urban parks are likely to draw visitors from several miles away and range in size from 40 to 100 acres. The parks which serve the City as a whole are Memorial Park, which is only 10 acres in size, and Clover Park, which is 17.9 acres in size. These parks serve the entire City and are the location for most of the active sports, yet parks that serve this broader role are typically much larger—on the order of 20 to 40 acres.

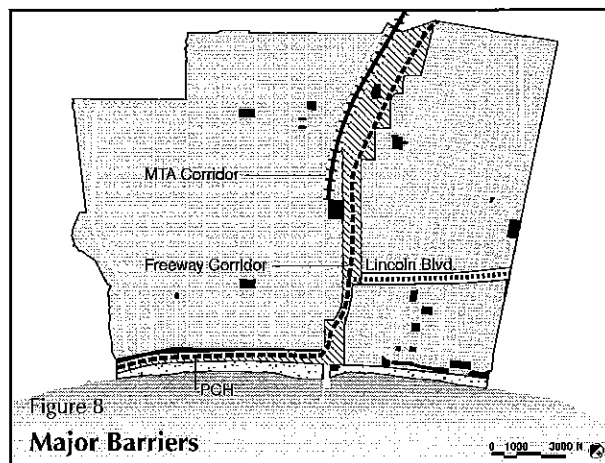
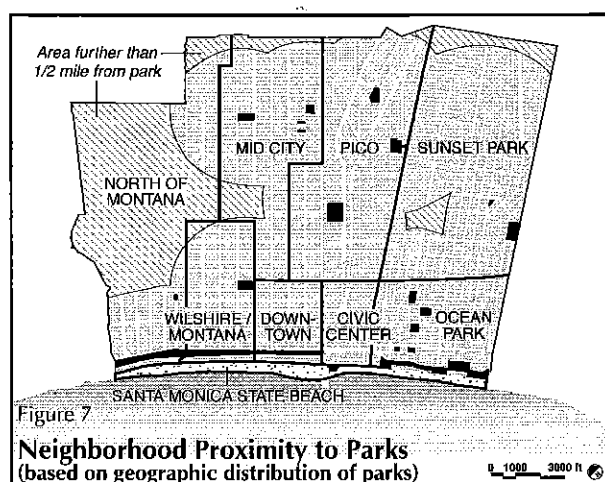
### Neighborhood Parks

Most of the parks in Santa Monica are of a scale more closely tied to neighborhood use. At the same time, they are not sufficiently well distributed to serve every neighborhood within

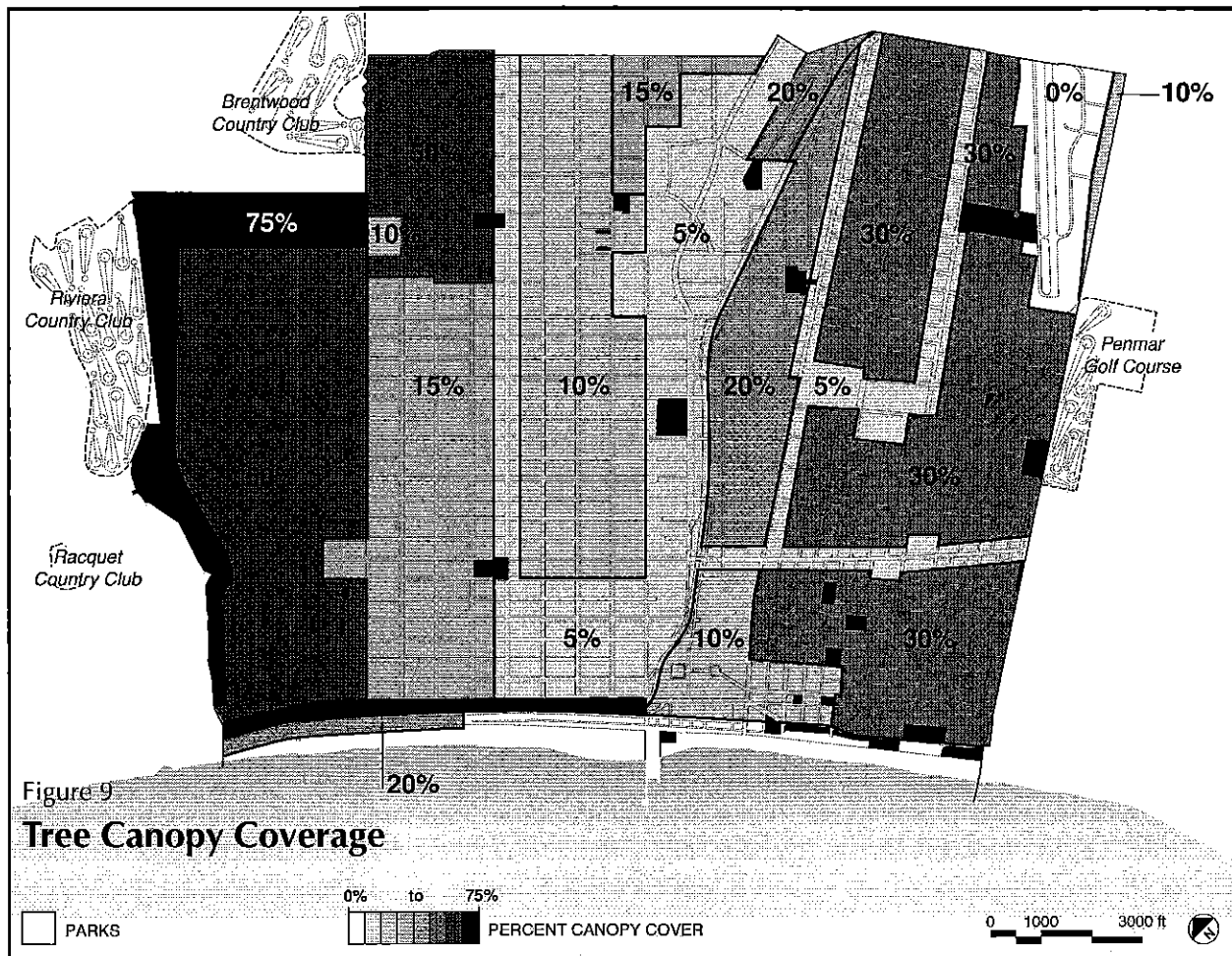
the City. Some neighborhoods are located more than one-half mile (or about a 10-minute walk) from a City park (Figure 7), such as portions of the North of Montana, Mid-City and Sunset Park neighborhoods.

Proximity to parks and their distribution within neighborhoods are important considerations in assessing the success of the park system and its capability to serve the needs of the population. In a community where over 50 percent of park users arrive by foot or bicycle, it is especially important to also consider the presence of physical barriers which limit access to parks, even though they may be fairly close (Figure 8). Along the Santa Monica Freeway, access is impaired not only by the freeway itself, but also by the fragmented grid on either side. As the freeway enters the Pacific Coast Highway, it reinforces the barrier created by the huge change in topography by introducing high-speed traffic for a distance of about 1-1/2 miles along the bay. Lincoln Boulevard is also a major barrier in the City, not only because of its traffic function, but also because the grids do not perfectly align from east to west, making crossings more difficult.

These barriers significantly diminish the accessibility of many parks, particularly for children and seniors. For instance, Memorial Park is the most centrally located park within the City, yet its adjacency to the freeway limits its accessibility, in particular for residents in the nearby Sunset Park and Pico neighborhoods. Similarly, access to the beach north of the Pier is seriously compromised by the freeway-type environment of the Pacific Coast Highway in this location. Joslyn Park, which is close to an underserved area east of Lincoln, cannot fulfill a larger role because Pearl Street terminates a block away at busy Lincoln Boulevard and pedestrians are forced to take an indirect and more lengthy route.







## Access to Nature

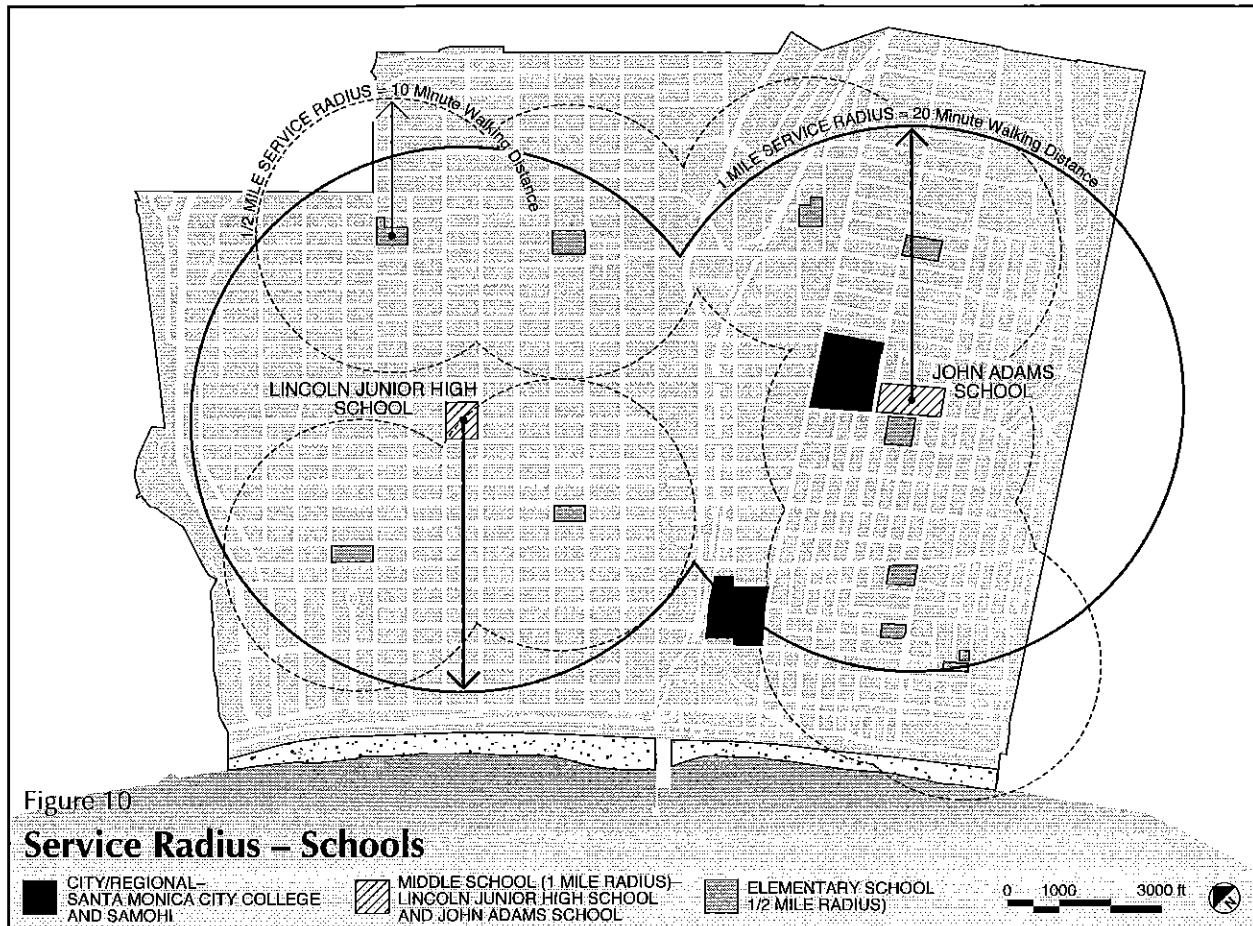
The sense of open space and its immediacy within neighborhoods is greatly influenced by the presence of landscaped areas that provide contrast and add complexity to the urban environment. Neighborhoods that are well landscaped often feel parklike in character, and the need for open space doesn't seem as great. For instance, there are few parks in or near the North of Montana neighborhood, yet tree-lined streets and broad grassy lawns give this neighborhood a very strong sense of open space.

On the other hand, many parts of the City are deprived of trees (Figure 9). Low tree canopy coverage occurs not only in higher density neighborhoods and industrial districts, but also

where the amount of street space devoted to landscape is far less than elsewhere, and where streets are not planted with a continuous landscape. As a result, districts of the City with less than 15 percent tree canopy coverage feel barren despite the presence of parks. Of the neighborhoods within the City, the Mid-City neighborhood is most impacted by a deficiency of tree canopy.

## Neighborhood Issues

Taking all of these factors into consideration, all of the neighborhoods in the City as well as the downtown would benefit from expanded parks and open space. However, certain neighborhoods experience specific deficiencies, and these are described as follows:



In the Pico neighborhood and extending into the Civic Center, the barrier effect of the freeway is the most significant issue, affecting not only adjacent residents, but the City as whole. It is in this area where the opportunity for parks is greatest, because of its central location and ability to serve the greatest number of people.

The Mid-City neighborhood is deficient in tree canopy and has a diminished sense of open space and landscape amenity. Although it actually is in closer proximity to a greater number of parks than the North of Montana area, it feels far more deficient in open space, because of the higher density and lack of trees and green areas.

In the Sunset Park area, there are issues related to physical barriers to existing parks. There are also portions of the neighborhood in the vicinity of Santa Monica College that are beyond a 1/2 mile radius from the closest park, making accessibility to open space more difficult.

In portions of the north of Montana neighborhood, the need for parks has been identified and points to the possible use of schools for specific neighborhood-based activities, but at the same time, the sense of open space is perhaps the greatest of any place in the entire community.

The Ocean Park neighborhood, while relatively well served by parks and the beach, would benefit from a refurbishment of the older parks to meet current and future needs.

*In the Downtown and along shopping streets, such as Main Street and Montana Avenue, large open spaces could interfere with the continuity of retail shops and dining, and the intensity of activities necessary to make these areas a success. At the same time, carefully designed public spaces help structure the urban experience, providing attractive places for people to interact. In these parts of the City, there is a special need to provide gathering places that support retail activities and help build a sense of community.*

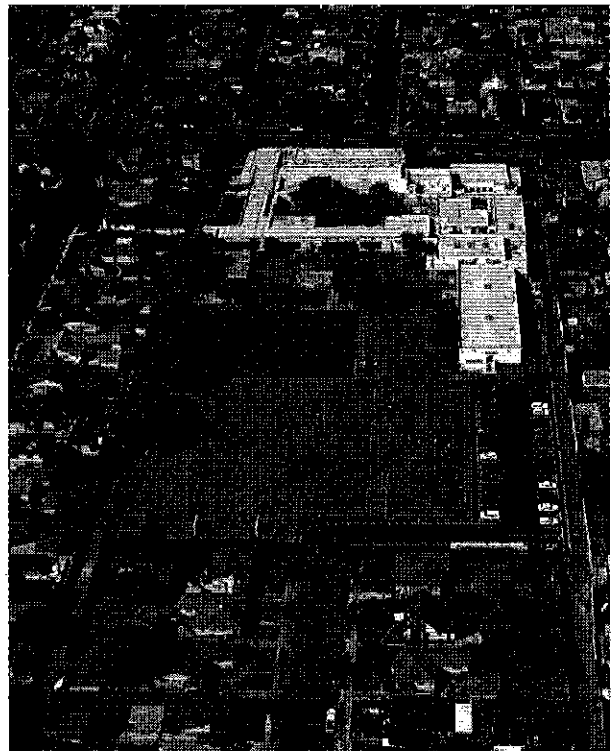
### **The Role of the Schools**

From the perspective of the neighborhood, schools are significant elements which contribute to the sense of open space within the community. Generally, there is a better distribution of schools than parks (Figure 10). Because of the high proportion of public school enrollment, these sites figure significantly into the everyday life of families and are used on an informal basis for recreation, and, increasingly for after school care through programs established by the City and the School District.

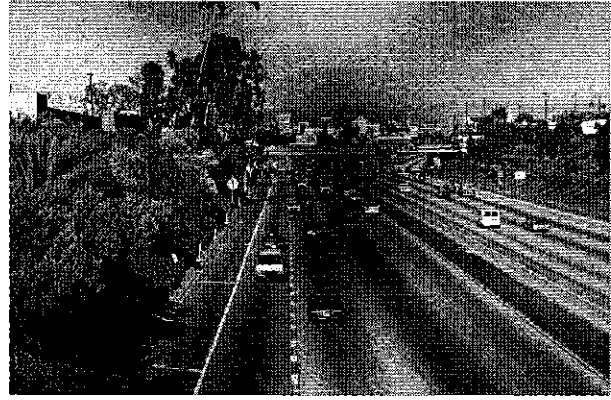
The schools have been the victims of overbuilding in much the same way as the parks. Over time, paved areas for parking and playground space have replaced fields and grassy lawns, thus reducing the park-like feel of the schools. However, the sites remain predominantly open, with 60 to 70 percent of the elementary school sites free of buildings. There is generally a greater number of buildings at the upper schools, but they still have much larger areas in fields and grassy open spaces that also contribute to a sense of open space within the City.

### **Future Opportunities for Open Space**

Santa Monica is constrained in its land resources. Most of the land is developed; is comprised of smaller, mostly residential parcels; and is extremely valuable. The City is built to its borders, and there are no open lands adjacent to it. There is very little vacant land and what exists is aggregated in small parcels. The acquisition of vacant lands for open space purposes is made problematic by the realities of site location, size and configuration. Although parcels less than one-half acre have been acquired for open space purposes in the past, they have not been very effective in contributing to a sense of open space in the City.



*The majority of land associated with schools is devoted to buildings and paved areas.*



*Public properties offer the greatest potential for open space purposes. Upper left: Santa Monica Municipal Airport. Lower left: City Streets. Upper right: Santa Monica Freeway. Lower right: Woodlawn Cemetery.*

## Public Property

State owned and regional public properties offer significant potential for open space purposes, not only because they are already in public ownership, but also because they are larger in size and more centrally located than private parcels available within the City. There are large public holdings devoted to transportation purposes, including the Santa Monica Freeway, which consumes about 80-100 acres of land in right-of-way as it traverses the City. Since the freeway is for the most part sunken below the grade of the surrounding landscape, it does not appear as a structure, but as a void in the landscape, with an opportunity to be enhanced as visual open space. In the Civic Center area, the freeway

feels like it is a part of the arroyo landscape—a natural environment that happens to be used by cars. This same quality could be emulated in other parts of the right-of-way.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) owns an abandoned rail line comprising approximately 12 acres and extending more than one mile from the eastern City limits to within one block of Memorial Park. The central location of the corridor and its adjacency to Memorial Park and Bergamot Station, a City-owned parcel under a master lease with an array of art galleries and services, make it especially well suited for consideration as open space, without preempting the possibility for future transit.

## City-owned Lands

Two large City sites—Mt. Olivette Reservoir and Woodlawn Cemetery—comprising 33 acres of land—are included in the City's open space inventory, since they are landscaped and open in appearance. Other City properties satisfy specific City needs for administrative space, transit operations and maintenance, storage, maintenance and recycling, and airport purposes. More specifically, they include the Bus Yard and Civic Center, straddling either side of the freeway to the west; the City Yards and Bergamot Station along the freeway to the east; and the Santa Monica Municipal Airport at the southeasterly edge of the City (Figure 11).

Of these sites, the Civic Center is already slated for open space improvements, with 13.2 acres to be set aside for this purpose as funds are made available in the future. In addition, 37 acres of the Municipal Airport were identified for possible nonaviation purposes and are currently under study for open space use. As part of the alternatives for the nonaviation lands, the possibility of trading portions of the site for other, more centrally located lands for open spaces has been discussed. In particular, certain functions at the City Yards are being evaluated for trade with a portion of nonaviation lands at the airport. The City Yards is not only well

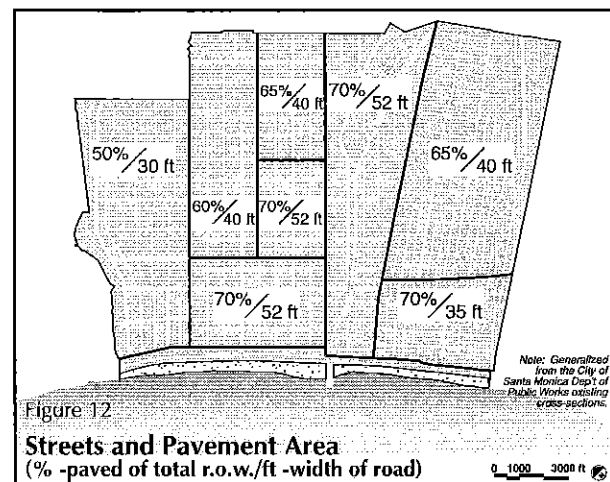
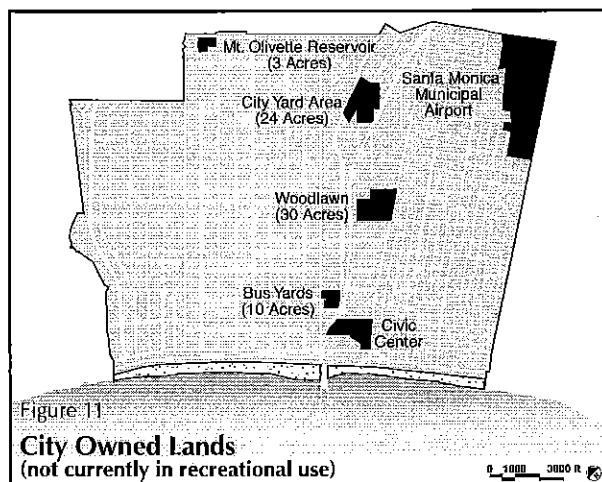
located within the City, but it is also immediately adjacent to Stewart Street Park, and lands in this location could be used to enhance the role of this facility within the surrounding neighborhood and City as a whole.

In looking at the history of the City's parks, it is clear that the City has a history of taking lands from its own inventory for open space use. For instance, Stewart Street Park was once a part of the City Yards, and Clover Park was part of the Municipal Airport. In the future, other City properties may present opportunities for park conversion as well.

## City Streets

In the broadest sense, streets comprise the single greatest resource of open space value in the City. There are approximately 150 miles of public streets in Santa Monica, totaling more than 1,200 acres of land, or 23 percent of the City's land area, not including alleys. This is nearly three times the current inventory of open space within the City.

Within the public rights-of-way, there are a range of street configurations and sizes (Figure 12). In the North of Montana area, typical residential streets are generally either 30 feet wide (15th to 25th Streets) or 40 feet wide



(7th to 14th Streets) and consume less than 50 percent of the public right-of-way. This leaves room for broad parkways (15 to 25 feet in width) planted with large trees along most neighborhood streets, and equates to a 2.5 to 4-acre public garden along each of the 20 residential streets running between San Vicente Boulevard and Montana Avenue. These streets have a higher percentage of landscape coverage than many City parks or schools, and they make delightful places in which to live next to, walk along or bicycle. They provide an excellent model for other neighborhoods to follow.

There is an opportunity to “green” streets throughout the City—especially in the densely settled center of the City between Wilshire

Boulevard and Pico Boulevard—without taking away parking or travel lanes. On excessively wide streets, landscape medians can create an wonderful visual amenity. Other cases may call for a widening of the parkway to provide additional room for landscaping and/or wider pedestrian promenades.

Upgrading streets can be a very cost-effective option for expanding open space in a community whose traditional park resources are both limited and overworked. In neighborhoods around the world, redesigning streets to be more human scaled has proven to be an extremely successful means of “calming” traffic and making a safer and healthier urban environment—especially for children.

# Open Space Concepts

There are a number of fundamental concepts that underlie the Open Space Element. These are summarized below and further discussed in the objectives and policies that follow.

## **A Seam of Central Open Spaces**

There is a significant commitment of public resources and land in the center of the City and along the freeway corridor. The Open Space Element places an emphasis on this area for a further consolidation of resources in the vicinity of the City Yards and Stewart Street Park, Memorial Park, and the Civic Center. It suggests that a priority be placed on the expansion of open spaces within these areas to create a series of linked open spaces extending from the east to the Beach.

## **The School as Park**

The Open Space Element further recognizes the role that the schools play in contributing to the community's open spaces, and it envisions the expansion of that role to create a well-distributed system of school parks that are accessible to the neighborhoods and which help to satisfy their needs. The conversion of paved surfaces into fields and greens and the improvement of school entries as public gathering places is set forth in the policies contained in this element.

## **Streets as Public Open Space**

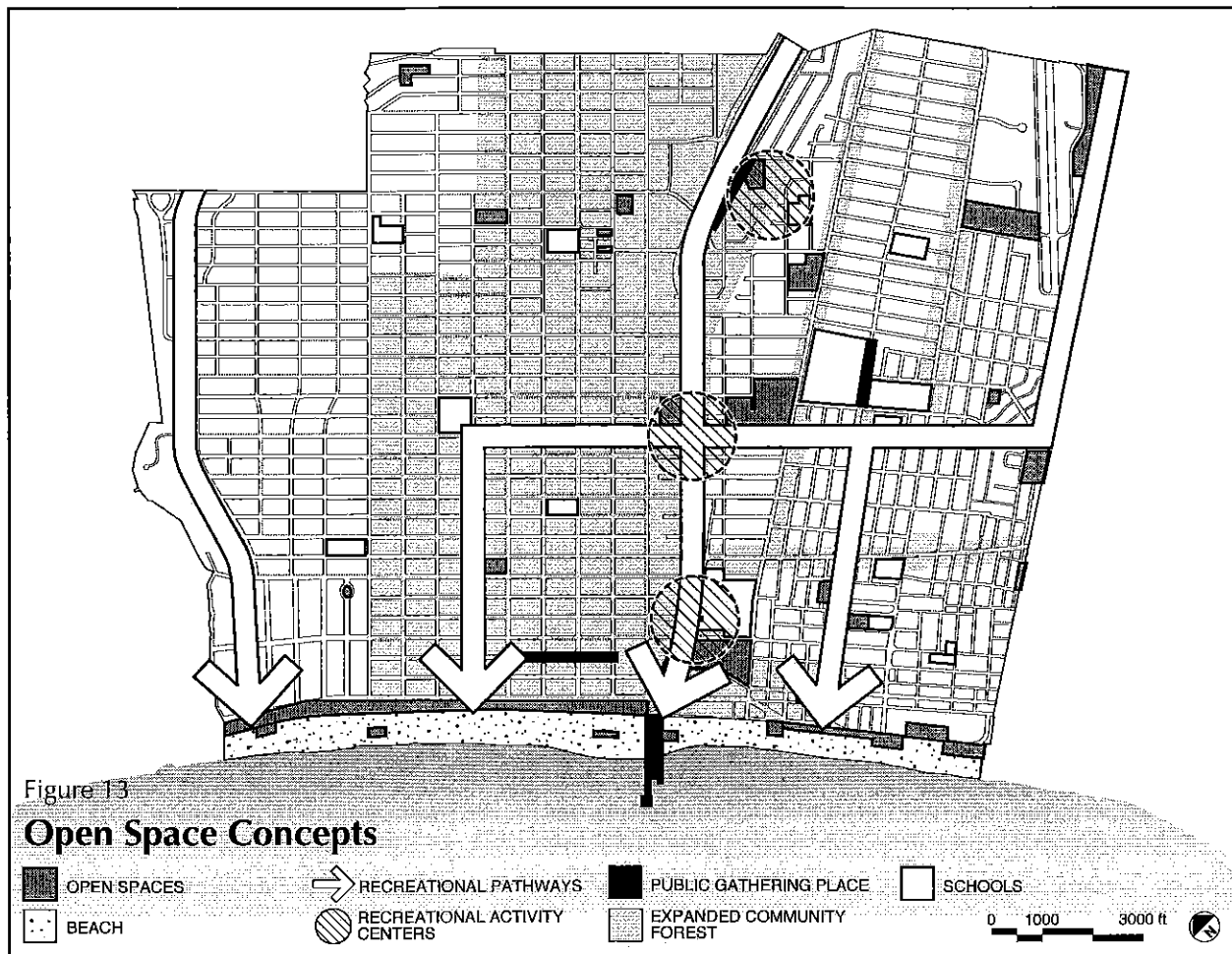
This Open Space Element advances the idea that the City can itself become a park by capitalizing upon the potential of streets as open space. The role and functioning of streets can be transformed through the reconfiguration of the public right-of-way and the elimination of excessive paved areas. Pavement areas within the street can be reduced to create a better balance between space reserved for vehicles and space reclaimed for other purposes by adding significant new open space into the City's inventory.

## **Recapturing the Beach**

The shoreline constitutes the greatest area of open space currently in the City and it holds great potential for new parks. This is particularly true to the north of the Santa Monica Pier, where the beach is so wide that it alone could be perceived as a barrier to the water. Taking fuller advantage of the beach and strengthening its connections with the City are important concepts set forth in the Open Space Element.

## **Reclaiming Lost Space**

Lost space is the underutilized or leftover land of cities often created by the introduction of the automobile into previously intact and coherent



urban environments. In Santa Monica, the fragmented blocks adjacent to the freeway, the streets which dead end into it, and the freeway embankments along it form a part of the lost space of the City. Lost space also includes public land with unrealized open space potential, including the nonaviation lands at the airport and the surface parking lots at the Civic Center. Capitalizing upon these resources and converting them into meaningful parks would result in the addition of a significant amount of land as open space.

### Restoring Nature in the City

A sense of nature constitutes a significant component of open space. It provides contrast with the urbanized world and has an ameliorat-

ing, restorative effect. To a great extent, the natural resources in Santa Monica have been subsumed into the City and very little remains of the natural landscape. Yet, at the same time, Santa Monica's park tradition began with the preservation of the bluffs at Palisades Park and there is strong interest in restoring nature in the City. This element carries on that tradition by encouraging the restoration of natural watercourses (where feasible), by creating a stronger sense of open space at high points and ridges; and by proposing a major expansion of the community forest and an extension of the landscape character north of Montana.



# Objectives and Policies

The following objectives and policies are intended to provide directions for the comprehensive preservation and development of open spaces within Santa Monica:

***Objective 1: Develop and maintain a diversified and balanced system of high-quality open space.***

A diversity of public open spaces need to be developed and maintained, creating a hierarchy of role and function and balancing the need for natural open spaces, developed parks, public gathering places and open space linkages within the community.

***Policy 1.1: Preserve existing public open space.***

Given the limited amount of lands in public open space throughout the City, any reduction in the inventory would constitute a serious loss to the community. The removal of large parks is hard to imagine, however, there could be other actions that might decrease the amount of open space in the City. For instance, loss of open space could be brought about by street closures, removal of steps to the water or conversion of public lands to non-recreation use, such as at the reservoir or further development of schools. It is important in the future, that the open space

role of current sites be expanded, and not diminished in any way.

***Policy 1.2: Reinforce individual identities in each of the City's parks.***

Each of the parks in the City is its own special and dominant identity, even though it may and should play a number of different roles. Douglas, Lincoln and Palisades Parks are historic parks built before the 1920s and the design of these parks as well as interpretative exhibits should be considered to further this role within the City.

The beach parks include Barnard Way, Beach Park #1, Beach Park #4, Crescent Bay Park, Ocean View Park and South Beach Park, and each of these as well as any others built on the waterside of Pacific Coast Highway, should complement activities along the beach and focus on the water.

Hotchkiss Park and Joslyn Park (and Palisades) are view parks, that should be developed to enhance views to the City and to the bay.

Community parks such as Clover, Los Amigos, Marine, Memorial and Stewart should continue to promote active play.

Virginia Avenue is a neighborhood park that should specialize in serving the recreational and social needs of the surrounding community; while the vest pocket parks (Ashland, Goose Egg, Ozone, Pacific Street, Park Drive Park and Schader) are visual resources that need to be maintained for this purpose, with pedestrian improvements provided.

MGM Park is a public use park on private land, and improvements should focus on making it more visible and accessible to the community.

*Policy 1.3: Acquire and develop new public open space throughout the City, giving priority to accessible locations within the geographic heart of the community.*

In the future, the use of public lands for open space will need to be intensified, however, acquisition and the development of new lands



*Existing pathways and open spaces should be preserved.*

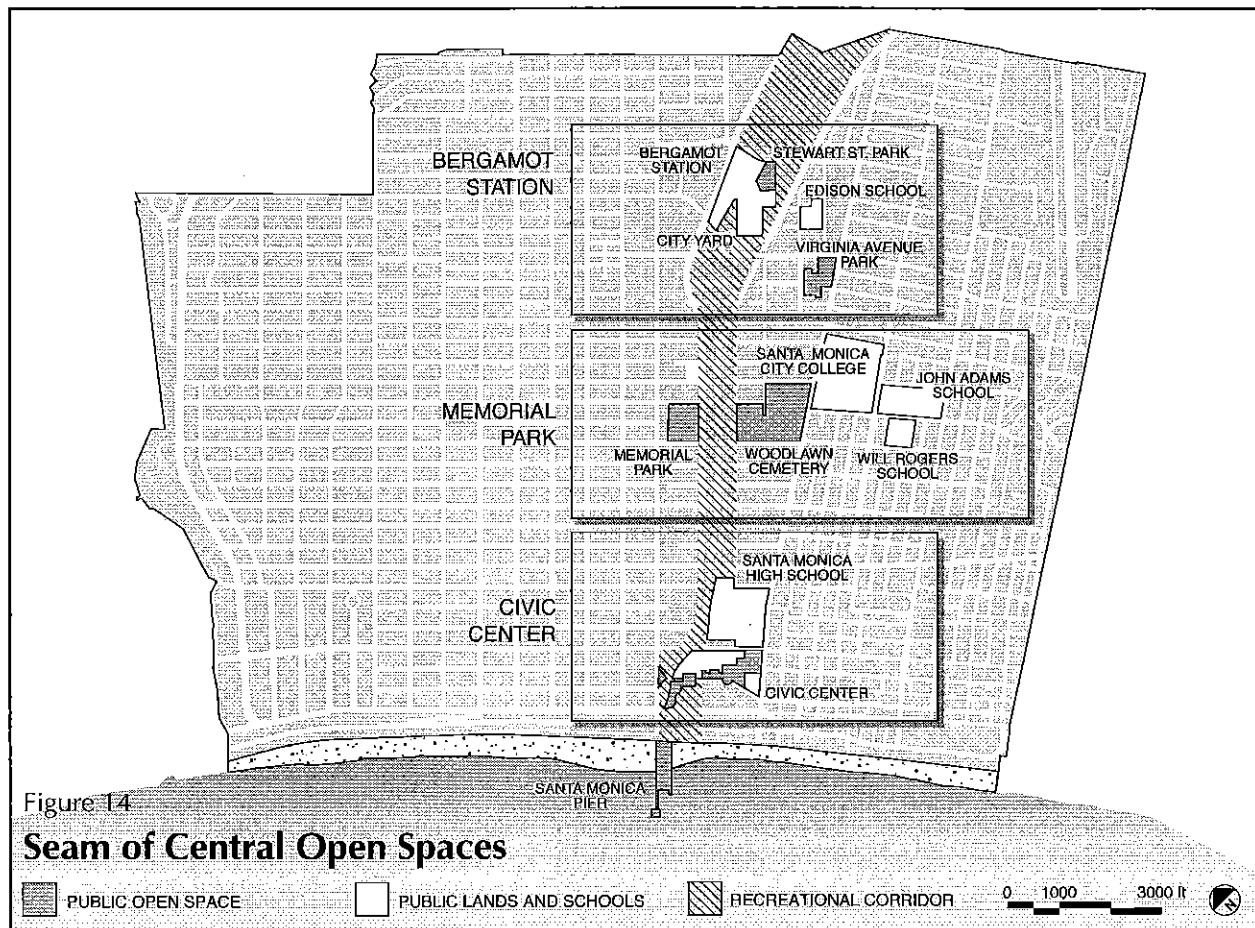
for open space is also necessary to continue to expand the system. New park and open space resources should be focused within the heart of the City where it can become a part of the best serve as many of the City's residents as possible.

*Policy 1.4: Provide opportunities for the enjoyment of open space within every Santa Monica neighborhood.*

Santa Monica today has generally an undersupply of lands in open space, but certain neighborhoods are more deficient than others. Increasing open space opportunities in some neighborhoods may involve reducing the barrier effect of certain roadways or the freeway; in other areas, it may involve localized street or alley improvements that are oriented to small neighborhood groups; in other areas, it may involve the reclamation of public lands for enhanced open space. In all cases, fostering activities in these open spaces that bring together families, friends and neighbors is a high priority. Public art and small informal cultural events are important aspects of bringing together neighborhoods.

*Policy 1.5: Expand public gathering places within the City.*

The role that open space can play in the social experiences of a community is extremely important and needs to be expanded within the City. Specific opportunities currently exist for the creation of new public gathering places along Pearl Street adjacent to Santa Monica College and developed in association with improvements to the front lawn of John Adams Middle School. In addition, the potential to increase the use of Bergamot Station for public gatherings is appropriate given the arts and cultural orientation that has developed there. This open space role can also be enhanced along retail streets within the City. In all cases, it is important to avoid the inclination toward over-



programming of the open spaces. Rather, flexibility needs to be retained to allow each of the spaces to be adapted to meet special needs, such as farmer's markets, block parties, and neighborhood get-togethers.

**Objective 2: Expand the open space system through use of public properties**

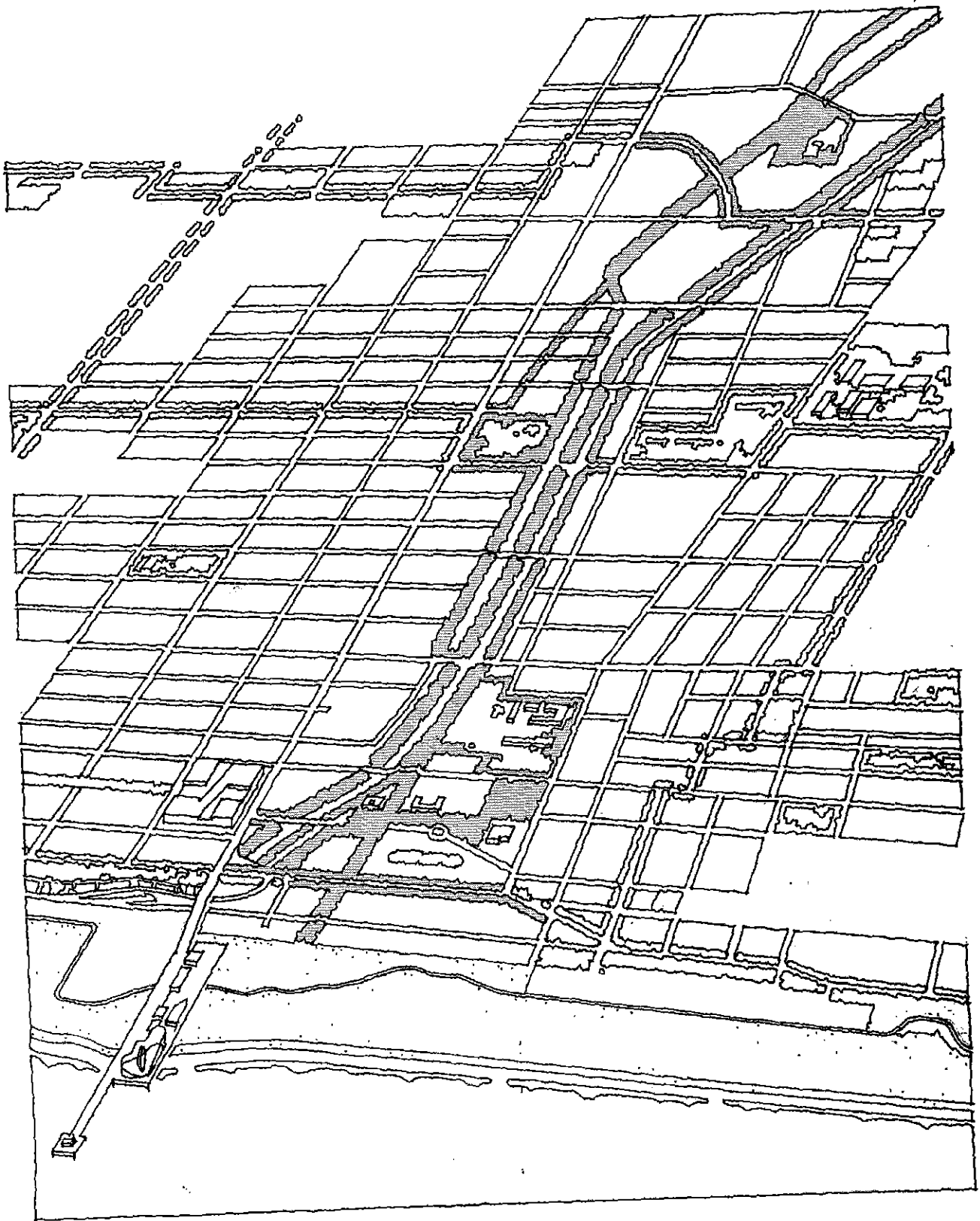
Many public properties are potentially valuable open space assets, because of their size, location and adjacency to parks. To the extent possible, City lands should be considered for open space, through more efficient use and configuration of existing lands or through shared use. Collaborative planning to expand facility sharing among the City, Santa Monica/Malibu School District, Santa Monica College and other public entities should be given the highest priority.

**Policy 2.1: Reuse portions of public lands.**

Nonaviation lands at the Municipal Airport are currently under study for potential conversion to open space purposes, including the possibility of trading more centrally located lands at the City Yards or other City-owned property, for land at the airport. The recommendations of this study will be incorporated into the Open Space Element.

**Policy 2.2: Expand open space role through shared use.**

Certain publicly owned sites currently serve as limited open space within the City, but can be more fully developed for this purpose, while accommodating public functions. For instance, both Mt. Olivette Reservoir and the Woodlawn Cemetery can play more significant roles if they



A seam of central open spaces will be established at the geographic heart of the City.

are opened to view, landscaped more fully and if simple pedestrian amenities, such as benches were provided in these locations. An expanded main building will provide opportunities for courtyards and greens for library patrons.

*Policy 2.3: Improve school sites as public open space*

Joint use of school land and facilities by the City and the schools provides the best option for expanding park area within several neighborhoods. Through reconfiguration of school yards, entry areas and the conversion of paved areas to turf, the schools within the City can play a much broader role as open space. A demonstration project should be undertaken to indicate how a school can be transformed both for enhanced recreational purposes, as well as for community and public gatherings.

*Policy 2.3: Reclaim excessively wide streets within the City.*

Certain streets within the City have excessively wide rights-of-way relative to traffic function or demand. In many instances, the width of the corridor shifts between grids or for isolated lengths of the entire roadway. Streets, such as portions of Pearl Street, Bicknell near the ocean or 7th near the foot of Joslyn Park, present opportunities to reconsider the nature of the street, not only for linear movement and continuity, but also as a significant open space destination in themselves.

*Policy 2.4: Encourage open space and recreational use of alleys and street ends.*

At the smallest scale, alleys and street ends provide informal opportunities to be reclaimed for children's play, community gardening, or neighborly get-togethers. Typically, these kinds of modifications do not exclude automobile access, but rather create a shared use zone that

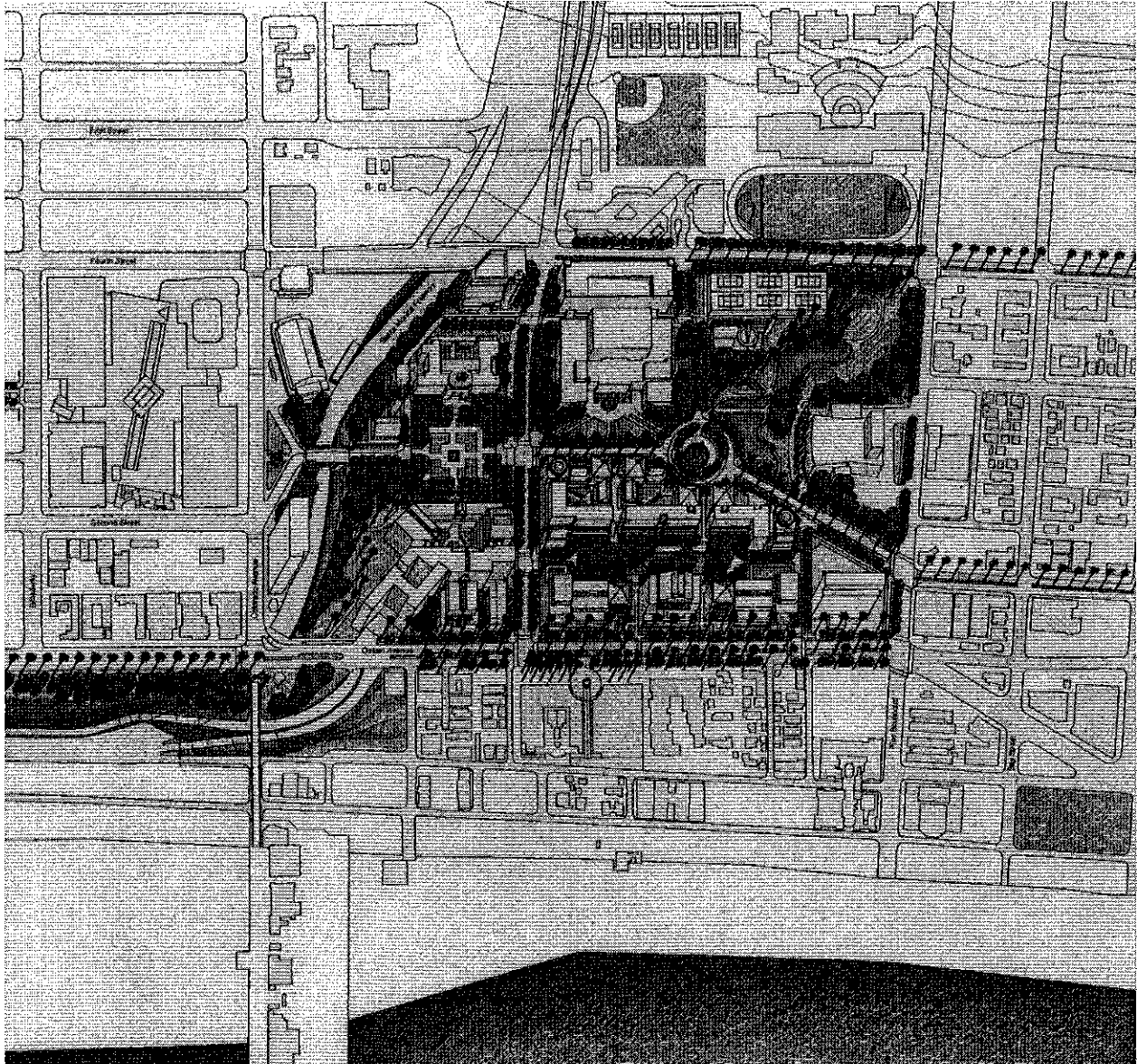
cars must move carefully through. They tend to be locally initiated and serve the needs of those living close by. Their success is often dependent on a high level of involvement and caring by local residents. Often called by their Dutch name "woonerf," these types of mixed-use residential streets are found widely in Europe and are beginning to be instituted in some more progressive American neighborhoods. A number of wide "street ends" along the freeway provide an ideal location for a model initiative.

*Policy 2.5: Transform surface parking lots.*

Surface parking lots and other low-utility land uses provide another potential source of "infilling" open space within a built-out city. In some cases, such as in the Civic Center area, existing lots can be consolidated into structures to create significant new parks and open spaces. In limited cases, such as some school sites, daytime parking on surrounding streets would allow replacement of surface lots with neighborhood open space. The environmental quality of the City's commercial and industrial areas could be greatly improved by simply planting trees in surface parking lots.



*The Olympic Boulevard/freeway corridor today.*



*Significant new open spaces are planned at the Civic Center.*

*Policy 2.6: Consider the development of freeway parks*

Freeway parks, while extremely costly, should be considered at key junctures—in particular, at the Civic Center and Memorial Park area, but also in the vicinity of Stewart Street Park, as a way of reducing the barrier effect of the freeway, establishing a greater open space role for a facility that comprises some 80 acres of the City. Specific locations for a freeway park would need to consider the width of the freeway and uses on

both sides, and given the high cost of construction, should be implemented through special funding programs, at a federal or state level.

***Objective 3: Establish a system of linked central parks.***

The Santa Monica Freeway/Olympic Boulevard corridor is a large swath of road infrastructure and fragmented industrial lands running from the City's eastern boundary to the ocean through the geographic center of the City. Along this

route are a series of large public parcels that together represent a significant concentration of publicly oriented activities. Though many of the sites do not play a major open space currently, the opportunity would be to redirect the development of the sites toward that end.

*Policy 3.1: Expand and develop the open space role of the Civic Center.*

The adopted Civic Center Specific Plan represents a major initiative to transform the parking lots and empty lawns into a series of linked public open spaces. A 6 acre multiuse park is proposed at the corner of Pico and 4th. This terminates at the Civic Circle—a focal point at the intersection of Main Street and a new east-west street. To the north, a 2 acre town square is proposed in front of City Hall as a major public gathering place for arts and cultural events. Finally, a 2 acre linear park along the historic arroyo connects the Town Square with Palisades Park and the Beach/Pier area across Ocean Avenue. Mixed-use development at the west edge of the site is carefully laid out to create a series of pedestrian linkages and view corridors to the sea.

As part of the public process which will be initiated to develop the parks within the Civic Center, the opportunity to maximize open space on site should be further explored. An additional one-half acre of land may be potentially added as open space to the north of City Hall adjacent to the freeway, where recreational uses are integrated along with the proposed viewing tower. In addition, the relationship to Santa Monica High School should also be examined in light of potential opportunities to improve and strengthen the open space connection between the High School and the Civic Center.

*Policy 3.2 Redefine the open space role of Memorial Park and improve its connection with Woodlawn Cemetery and Santa Monica College.*

At the midpoint of the proposed central spine is Memorial Park—one of the City's most important recreation parks. This park has not lived up to the potential of its size and location. A strong identity should be developed that encourages community-wide use and provides stronger linkages to Santa Monica Community College and John Adams Middle School.

*Policy 3.3: Provide linkages between Stewart Street Park and Bergamot Station.*

Adjacent to Stewart Street Park is approximately 20 acres of City property, that is almost entirely

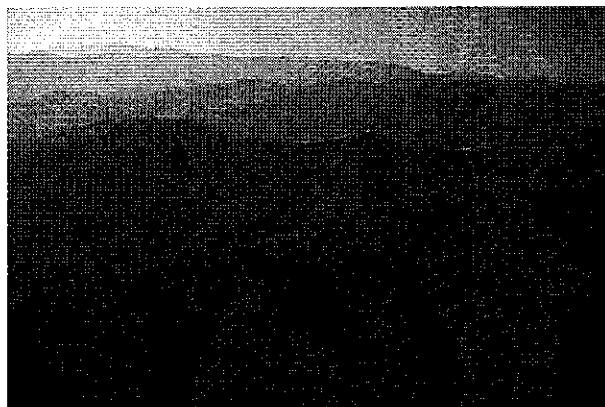


*Upper: Linkages between Stewart Street Park and Bergamot Station should be established. Lower: San Vicente Boulevard is one of the most beautiful green streets anywhere.*

paved and committed to purposes other than open space. Community access to Bergamot Station should be expanded to include more community oriented activities, in particular, linkages should be improved between Stewart Street Park and the MTA bicycle path.

***Objective 4: Establish a citywide system of pathways and linear open spaces***

A system of linear open spaces should be created on streets and public rights-of-way and provide interesting and attractive pathways to link City parks and public open space within the neighborhoods and throughout the City. These open spaces can significantly add to the amenity and livability of the City and help to extend the community forest



*Upper: Opportunities to reconnect the city with the beach should be strengthened. Lower: The Santa Monica Mountains are a nearby open space sanctuary.*

***Policy 4.1: "Green" neighborhood streets.***

Streets should be reconceived in terms of a greater open space role within the City. Improvements should be planned for reducing the curb to curb dimension of roadways and expanding parkways and medians along neighborhood streets. On many local streets, two-way traffic and parking can be accommodated while still reducing the street space by ten feet or more. This reclaimed land should be converted into green open spaces that expands the urban forest and add to the attractiveness of the City and its neighborhoods.

The "greening" of broad streets like California, Olympic, and Pearl offer excellent opportunities to create distinctive linear landscapes at the center of neighborhoods. At a smaller scale, beautiful street trees can create a memorable open space on almost any neighborhood street.

***Policy 4.2: Utilize streets to form open space linkages within the City.***

Incorporating recreational pathways into selected "green street" corridors will create open space linkages connecting major school and recreational sites at the center of the city and several east-west linkages connecting inland neighborhoods with the beach parks and bikepath. Specific opportunities include:

- Olympic Boulevard and the MTA corridor to connect the sequence of central parks extending from the east to the bay.
- Unimproved lands along the southern edge of the City and connecting Marine Park to potential park lands at the Municipal Airport.
- A corridor traversing the City in the north/south direction, to link multiple open space destinations and attractions, including Lincoln Middle School, Memorial Park,



Woodlawn Cemetery, Santa Monica College, and John Adams Middle School, and extending to Marine Park.

- Two east-west corridors connecting the inland neighborhood of Sunset Park and Mid-City to the beach.

*Policy 4.3: Enhance the MTA corridor as a bicycle lane and linear open space*

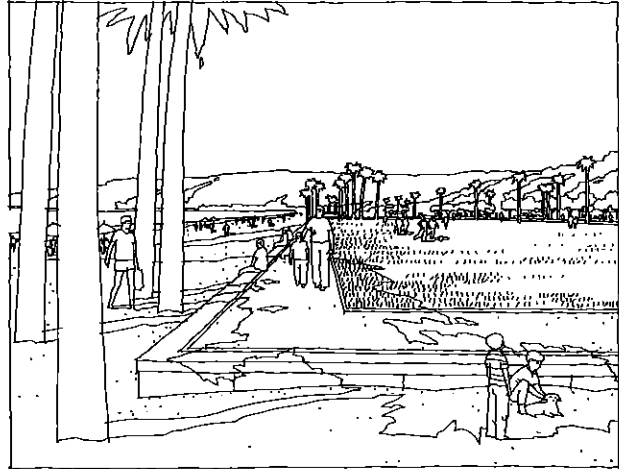
The MTA corridor is an important linear element within the City, of historic importance as the site of the original rail line that first brought people to the coast, and has been preserved to provide transit linkages between Santa Monica and the surrounding region. The corridor should be landscaped and improved as usable open space without compromising potential transit use. A dedicated bicycle lane should be implemented along the corridor and connected to Memorial Park, with continuous landscaping that heightens its legibility as an open space element from throughout the City.

***Objective 5 Establish stronger connections to regional open spaces.***

The Santa Monica Mountains and Santa Monica Bay form the regional context for Santa Monica and are an important part of its open space identity. The mountains are a part of the National Recreational Area and comprise 70,000 acres of federal land; the State owns the beaches, which extend uninterrupted for hundreds of miles along the California coast. Access to these resources—both physical and visual—should be strengthened.

*Policy 5.1 Reconnect the City and the beach.*

There are a number of opportunities to reestablish community connections to the beach. Innovative initiatives such as improved



*New beach parks are proposed north of the pier.*

pedestrian bridges from Palisades Park to the Beach, stairways and boardwalks are among the approaches that should be considered to make it easier for pedestrians, skaters, bicyclists, baby strollers and persons with disabilities to get down the bluffs and out to the water's edge. In the Ocean Park area, redesigning oversized street ends and preserving public steps and other garden elements can help create stronger visual and physical connection to inland areas to these beachfront amenities.

*Policy 5.2: Develop new beach parks.*

The Beach is already in open space, but portions to the north of the Municipal Pier need to be improved to increase its attractiveness and recreational use. In this portion of the shoreline, beach parks similar to those established on the south side of the pier should be developed, creating more amenable places for a variety of recreational and open space pursuits. These beach parks are envisioned as open greens that would be flexible in use and oriented to the water. They would be located in front of existing parking areas and developed in intervals to create recreational destinations along the beach.



*The wash at Marine Park (above) could be restored as a natural habitat.*

***Policy 5.3: Strengthen connections to the mountains.***

The Santa Monica Mountains provide a visual frame of reference to the City and are an important part of its scenic character. Views to the mountains are framed by north-south streets and are prominent from many open areas such as recreation fields and the freeway overpasses. These views should be protected and enhanced by landscape improvements and special tree planting on key streets.

***Objective 6: Reinforce the underlying physiographic structure of the City.***

The identity of Santa Monica comes, to a large extent, from the form of the landscape—its steep bluffs and wide beaches; its undulating hills and upland slopes; its historic stream corridors and promontories. The most dramatic of these—the Palisades and the beach—are already part of the City’s open space system. Enhancing other features, such as ridges and drainages, can heighten the identity of the City’s connection to the native landscape.

***Policy 6.1: Restore stream corridors, wherever feasible.***

Most of the streams that once traversed Santa Monica have been buried beneath the City in huge storm drains, conveying runoff from the mountains to the sea. Although the major drainages are underground, those that remain above grade should be considered for restoration as natural open space. “California Wash: a Memorial” at the foot of Pico Boulevard at the beach is an excellent example of how public art has commemorated these natural washes. The swale that drains from the south side of the City into Penmar Golf Course within the city limits of Los Angeles presents another opportunity to develop a more natural open space within the setting of Marine Park—enriching both the environmental quality of the drainage and providing a unique park experience.

***Policy 6.2: Emphasize ridgetop parks and open space.***

The topographic structure of the City is emphasized by a series of open spaces that sit on high points or along ridges in the urban landscape, including Palisades Park, Joslyn Park, Hotchkiss Park and Mount Olivette Reservoir,. In these open spaces, care should be taken to prohibit the construction of structures which

would obstruct views to the surrounding landscape. At the same time, improvements which increase the visibility and prominence of these parks within the City should be encouraged.

*Policy 6.3: Protect the Santa Monica bluffs.*

The Palisades are one of the most important and more fragile natural features within Santa Monica. Steps should be taken to ensure that the erosion of the bluffs is not artificially accelerated and that the integrity of the bluffs is maintained.

*Policy 6.4: Extend Palisades Park.*

Palisades Park is one of the major open space features of Santa Monica that helps to preserve the bluffs and establish a unique landscape identity to the front porch of the City. Consistent with the Civic Center Specific Plan, the continuity and character of the landscape should be extended along Ocean Avenue south of the freeway to reinforce the importance of this feature, create a stronger frame and visual reference, and reduce the barrier effect of the freeway at one of the most critical junctures in the City.

***Objective 7: Clarify City form and structure.***

Open space is a key element in defining City form and identity. It can help shape the urban landscape and develop a sense of place. Landscape elements can distinguish a community from its neighbors and mark important entry points. Neighborhood parks and civic spaces can act as focal points of community identity and activities. Lineal open space elements such as boulevards, greenways or shorelines can link together various individual open spaces and community facilities into a citywide park and open space system. Finally, an open space system that includes elements of different sizes—from small neighborhood parks

to an expansive urban forest—provides a sense of scale and spatial hierarchy.

*Policy 7.1: Strengthen City edges.*

A strong sense of open space at the perimeter of the City can help differentiate Santa Monica from neighboring urban communities. The precipitous canyon landscape, the heavily wooded neighborhoods, and the adjacent private country clubs have already established a strong open space edge in the City's north end. As one moves south, the City's edge is much harder to distinguish. Improvements which link the nonaviation lands at the Municipal Airport, Marine Park and adjacent utility right-of-ways, and City parks along the south boundary should be pursued.

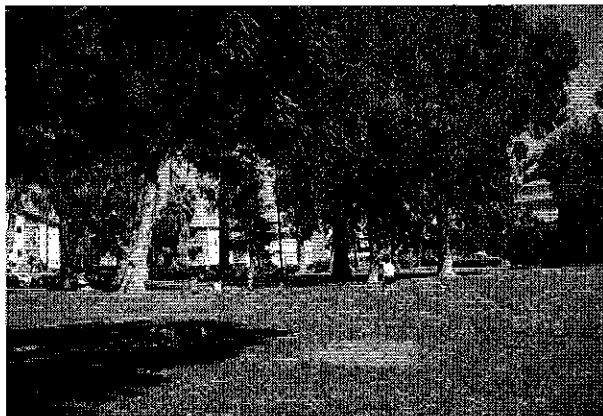
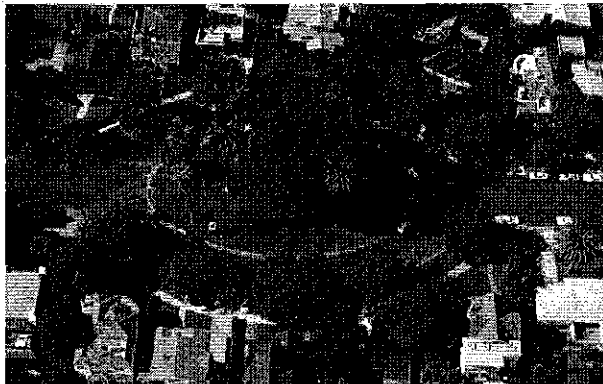


*The continuity and character of the Palisades Park landscape should be extended.*

*Policy 7.2: Develop distinctive community entries.*

Entry points into the City are another opportunity to build a distinct community identity. Currently, most visitors enter Santa Monica via the rather nondescript Santa Monica Freeway and its exit ramps. Other prominent gateways include major surface streets such as Wilshire, Santa Monica and Lincoln Boulevards.

The freeway and the surface streets represent major opportunities to transform the sense of arrival into the City. Civic-scale landscape treatments can help mark a distinct sense of entering the City. The sense of arrival can be augmented by special lighting, banners or public art that help to build civic identity and a sense of place. Finally, emphasis should be placed on



*Parks and open space should be used to create focal points in the City. Above: Goose Egg Park, Below: Lincoln Park.*

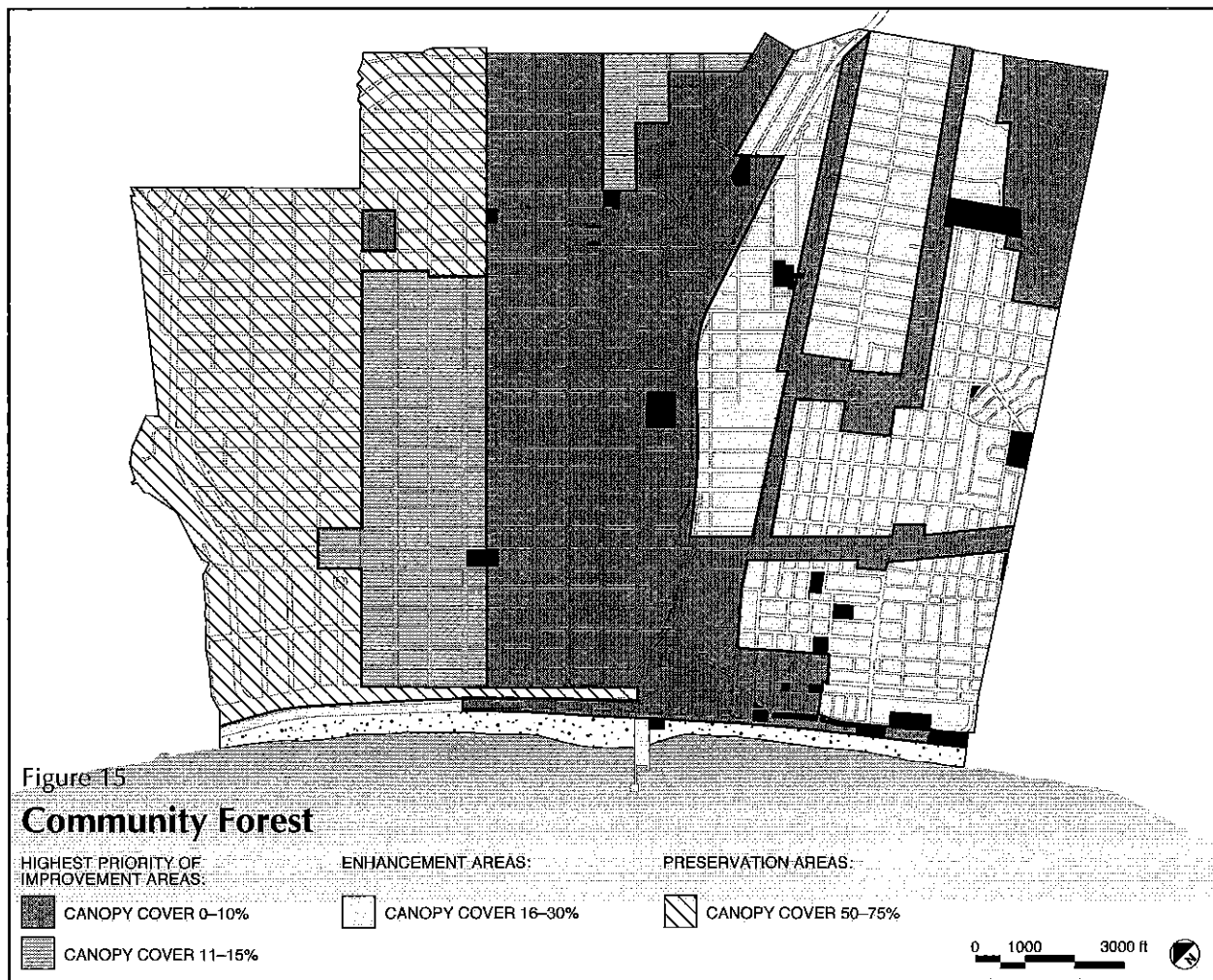
open space and landscape improvements along the primary corridors of movement on the east and western sides of the City - Cloverfield Boulevard, Centinela on the east and Ocean Avenue on the west - to reinforce a sense of place and create a gracious sense of entry into the City.

*Policy 7.3: Mark key transitions in city structure.*

Santa Monica's urban structure is distinguished by a series of juxtaposed street grids, of various scales, that were added to the City over its first half century. The particular way in which they transition from one to another gives a distinct texture and pattern to street system. On the north side the original grid is extended in a relatively consistent way. In the south, the more informal meshing of small grids creates a completely different sense of urban structure and the topography underlying the City. Open space improvements at the juncture of these grids can help to heighten district identity and a sense of place.

*Policy 7.4: Create focal points at significant places in the City.*

Open space can be used to give focus to the City and heighten the visibility of significant places. Palisades Park shows how open space can reinforce the importance of the beach; Goose Egg Park illustrates how emphasis can be given at the terminus of a street; and the parks planned at the Civic Center interjects parks along Main Street where they can acknowledge City Hall and other important public buildings. Open spaces should be designed as focal points at other important places of the City, such as the terminus of 17th at Santa Monica College, the end of Pearl Street near the foot of Joslyn; and the entry to the Santa Monica Pier.



### Objective 8: Heighten the sense of nature in the City.

Most Santa Monicans place a high value on access to the natural world. However, most of our time is spent within the City—an area where the natural world has been significantly altered. By heightening the sense of nature in the City, the opportunity to forge contacts with natural elements—trees, earth, water, fresh air and sky—is provided to a population increasingly isolated from nature.

*Policy 8.1: Maintain and expand the community forest.*

Consistent with the City's Sustainable City Program, the community forest in Santa Monica should be protected and systematically expanded through tree planting programs along the City's streets and within parks and other important public places. Those areas shown having the lowest percentage of tree canopy cover, generally between Pico and Wilshire Boulevards, should be given priority in making improvements that will make possible the planting of new trees that maximize canopy coverage. Other important areas include prominent public places such as parks, schools and public gathering places. Wherever possible, reduction of paving area to increase area for planting should be encouraged.



*"California Wash: a Memorial".*

*Policy 8.2: Develop a "freeway forest."*

The embankments of the freeway itself actually constitute a major opportunity for significant linear tree planting. This is true to a lesser extent on adjoining arterial streets and private parcels. A major tree planting program could create a "freeway forest" that would significantly mitigate the visual impacts of the freeway, improve air quality, and provide a more welcoming and appropriate gateway environment to the City. A line of tall trees running along the banks of a rushing freeway may in some way recall the lost arroyo that once ran along the corridor.

*Policy 8.3: Promote biodiversity in and expand city gardens.*

In the City's gardens and greenways, special attention should be placed on landscape that is not only drought tolerant but also which

addresses biodiversity within the local environment. Gardens should be developed which demonstrate the tremendous richness and variety of flora that can be propagated successfully within the climate and environment of Santa Monica. These can become a part of a larger sequence of open-air interpretative exhibits that build upon the educational, as well as visual and recreational, values in the landscape.

*Policy 8.4: Develop new community gardens.*

Community gardens are important in a city where the majority of residents do not have a backyard area where they can grow their own vegetables, fruit or flowers. Gardens provide benefits not only to the gardeners, but also to neighbors and passersby who get to watch the gardens grow and change through the seasons. Freeway adjacent street ends are a viable opportunity for expanding the City's current community garden program.

*Policy 8.5: Introduce water in city open spaces.*

Santa Monica is a coastal community whose greatest open space asset is the bay and ocean beyond. Extending the presence of water in inland open spaces should be pursued through the development of fountains, interactive play and water features. At the same time, it is extremely important that water elements emphasize the importance of conservation and incorporate recycling or other water conserving features into their design.

***Objective 9: Increase the accessibility of open space.***

Consideration should be given to enhancing accessibility in the largest sense of the word. It implies physical access and the reduction of barriers; visual access with treatments that

punctuate the horizon and increase the legibility of open spaces; as well as environmental access and the need of each park and open space to have access to the sun and a sense of nature.

*Policy 9.1: Increase physical access to parks and open spaces, in particular for youth and persons with disabilities.*

Accessibility to the City's parks should be strengthened by providing ways of getting to the parks and open spaces in an independent fashion for those with special needs, including youth and seniors.

*Policy 9.2: Increase the visibility of the parks.*

Open spaces should become more visible within the City. Landscape improvements should be planned and implemented that consider the role and hierarchy of parks within the system. In some cases, such as Stewart Street and Lincoln Parks, opportunities to expand or reconfigure existing uses to create greater frontage and presence on the street, should be considered. In other cases, key facilities within parks should be emphasized appropriately.

*Policy 9.3: Provide appropriate signage for orientation and interpretative purposes.*

Signage should be developed for the City as a whole and incorporated into recreational pathways for enhanced orientation to the City's parks and open spaces. Within individual parks, interpretative signage as well as directional signage should be incorporated in the historic parks and in the larger sports parks, that offer a variety of facilities.

*Policy 9.4: Protect solar access in public space.*

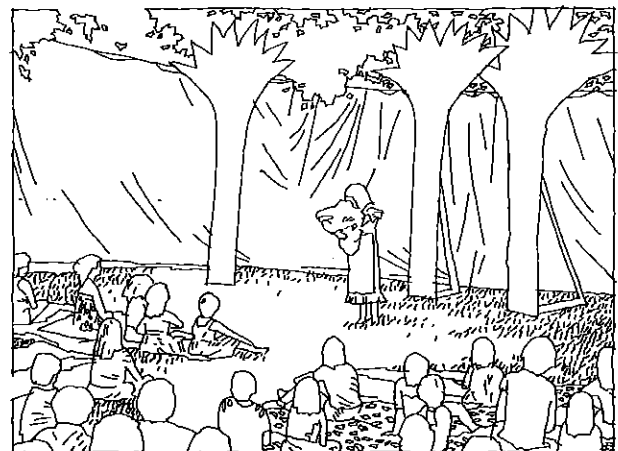
Requirements should be made for the development of buildings over 40 feet adjacent to parks, schools, or important community gathering places, to protect solar access and avoid shading of important outdoor areas.

***Objective 10: Incorporate art and cultural events in public places.***

Art in public places plays an important role in adding depth and meaning to open space. Public art can work at many levels, contributing an enhanced understanding of social context, heightening environmental awareness and clarifying community intent. Public visual art as well as cultural events should be integrated into City open spaces.

*Policy 10.1: Integrate public art into park design.*

Currently the City provides funding for public art through the Percent for Arts Program. This has supported important projects such as "The Dinosaurs of Santa Monica" on the Third Street Promenade, the "California Wash: a Memorial," Natural Element Sculpture (NES) Park on the beach, and the upcoming improvements on the Beach Promenade and Palisades Park. To enhance this initiative, park improvement project



*Small informal cultural events are encouraged within open spaces.*



*Santa Monica Pier*

budgets should include adequate arts funding to promote the involvement of artists in park design and public art integration into these projects.

*Policy 10.2: Encourage temporary visual art installations in parks and other open spaces.*

The richness of Santa Monica's artistic community should be tapped for a variety of publicly accessible projects. For example, linear parks, medians and neighborhood parks represent perfect opportunities for temporary and interactive public art experiences.

*Policy 10.3: Provide open space venues for small, informal cultural events.*

In redefining, invigorating and expanding parks and public gathering places, venues should be provided for a variety of cultural events. The current renaissance of Santa Monica's performing arts community provides abundant collaborative opportunities and a rich talent pool for dance, music, theater, poetry readings and story telling in public places.



# Implementation Approaches

Implementation of the Open Space Element will be an ongoing effort involving the development of detailed approaches to refine, revise and further the policies set forth in this document. It will involve identification of responsible entities, the refinement of funding strategies preparation of capital and operating budgets. Implementation of open space policies requires an approach that is opportunistic as well as directed and emphasizes flexibility and choice to determine what best accommodates local needs and priorities.

The policies set forth in this Open Space Element provide a framework for the future. It is consistent with the other General Plan Elements and important city policy documents. The Open Space Element will result in the preparation of master plans to guide park expansion initiatives, a reinvestment into existing parks and the establishment of a Green Streets and Recreational Pathways program. The final Open Space Element will also incorporate the recommendations of the Non-Aviation Lands Study at the Airport. Community input and support will be the cornerstone of the Element's implementation.

The implementation of the open space policies will result in comprehensive improvement of the city's parks and open spaces. It significantly

increases parks and open space, adding 34 to 64 acres into the City's inventory (see Table 2). A variety of different types of open spaces are to be created, that serve recreational, cultural, social, educational and environmental functions, and are oriented to the needs of residents—both now and in the future. With these planned additions, the amount of open space available within the city will increase to between 454 to 483 acres, ultimately comprising approximately nine percent of the total urban area. In addition, 16 miles of enhanced linear open space and recreational corridors will traverse the city and tie together the diverse open spaces, creating an integrated recreation and park system and the community forest will be expanded by over 7,000 new trees.

A variety of implementation approaches should be pursued which maximizes both public and private resources and which emphasizes shared use through community partnerships. These are as follows:

*Public Private Partnerships.* Cooperation between the City, Santa Monica-Malibu School District and Santa Monica College will be key to expanding the park and recreational facilities in the City. Development of school-parks at the neighborhood schools, the Municipal Pool and a public gathering place near the Santa Monica

College (the Campus Promenade on Pearl Street) are key proposals that will require cooperative agreements related to improvements, operations and maintenance, as well as significant involvement of school communities and neighbors.

**Table 2**  
**Future Open Spaces**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Acres</b>
<b>Parks</b>	
Airport Nonaviation Lands	1.0–25.0
Virginia Avenue Park Expansion	2.9
Civic Center <sup>1</sup>	13.2–15.4
School Parks <sup>2</sup>	8.0
New Parkland Acquisition <sup>3</sup>	5.0
City Yards	1.0
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>31.3–57.3</i>
<b>Public Gathering Places</b>	
Campus Promenade	2.0
<i>Subtotal Public Gathering Places</i>	<i>2.0</i>
<b>Green Streets and Community Forest</b>	
Medians and Parkways	10 mi.
Pathways	3 mi.
Freeway Forest	3 mi.
<i>Subtotal Green Streets, Pathways and Community Forest</i>	<i>16 mi.</i>
<b>Gardens, Greens and Habitat</b>	
Street End Parks <sup>4</sup>	1.0
Marine Wash Restoration	0.3
23rd Street Slope	3.0
<i>Subtotal Community Gardens</i>	<i>4.3</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>34.4–63.6</b> <b>16 mi.</b>

*Notes:*

1. Assumes 13.2 acres specified in the Civic Center Specific Plan plus the potential addition of 2.2 acres elsewhere within the site.
2. Acreage includes field area only.
3. Assumes purchase of five acres of land.
4. Assumes 6 parks, typically 150' x 70'.

Cooperation between the City and the State will also be critical to implement proposals to improve Santa Monica State Beach and the freeway corridor. Implementation of the freeway forest will require cooperative agreements between the City and Caltrans related to planting and maintenance obligations. Proposals related to beach greening and expansion of the beach parks north of the Municipal Pier will require approval by the State Coastal Commission and State Department of Parks and Recreation and will require the extension of lease agreements giving the City management responsibility over state lands.

The City will also need to establish an agreement with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which is a regional transportation agency, to enable the open space use and development of the MTA corridor. This agreement would need to reserve the right for MTA to develop the corridor for transit purposes and would provide its interim use and long term enhancement as a corridor within the City.

*Private/Non-Profit Initiatives.* Private individuals, groups and businesses within the City can contribute significantly to the open space system through gifts and donations as well as sponsorships of programs and events. Private nonprofit organizations can act as a bridge between the private and public sectors, to assist in the acquisition of lands or to obtain funds for implementation of public open space programs. An entity, such as "Friends of the Parks" or a park conservancy should be one of the vehicles considered to assist in the implementation of certain open space programs. Neighborhood groups can also be extremely effective in taking the initiative to implement open space concepts; such as the conversion of alleyways or local streets to greater open space and recreational use.



