

**REPORT OF THE BLUE RIBBON PANEL
ON
PARKS, RECREATION FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE
TO THE
GLENDALE CITY COUNCIL
MARCH 1, 2000**

INTRODUCTION

Good evening my name is Marc Stirdivant and I am the co-chair of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Parks, Recreation Facilities and Open Space.

I would like to begin this evening by respectfully requesting that you withhold your comments and questions until we have completed the presentation of our entire report.

In October of 1999 a Blue Ribbon Panel was appointed by the City Council. The Panel members were Mary Boger, Dolly Carl, Pierre Chraghchian, John Cianfrini, Fred Dong, Max Hobbs, Ara Khachatourian, Artin Manoukian, Larry Moss, Bob Packwood, Jim Pagliuso, Frank Quintero, Richard Ramirez, Richard Reyes, Cyrus Sajadian, Keith Sharp, Father Joseph Shea, Mirna Stanley, Robert Taylor, Charles "Tye" Veden, Greg White, James Woody and myself.

At our first meeting in November Mary Boger was elected chair of the Panel and I her co-chair. The Panel has met 15 times, including two public meetings, held in Council Chambers and televised on Channel 6, and one field trip for on site visits to parks.

The Panel has reviewed the Recreation Element of the General Plan, as well as the Open Space and Conservation Element. We have also had the Recreation Element Implementation plan presented to us by members of the Parks Commission and received a similar presentation regarding City libraries from Laurel Patric, Director of Libraries.

Other presentations to the Panel included:

- Nello Iacono on Parks, Recreation & Community Services
- Scott Reese on developing a model to calculate park system renovation and development costs
- Jeanne Armstrong, Director of Development Services for the Glendale Redevelopment Agency
- Rorie Skei, Deputy Director, State of California, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
- Rod Carter and Richard Clark, Sutro & Company on funding mechanisms
- Don Zabinski, Administrative Analyst, the City's grant writer for parks
- Laura Biedebach, Field Representative for Congressman Rogan
- Assembly member Scott Wildman
- James R. Brown, Superintendent of the Glendale Unified School District
- James E. Starbird, City Manager
- Dr. John Davitt, President, Glendale Community College

- Scott Howard, City Attorney
- Robert J. Franz, Director of Finance and Administrative Services

At our first public meeting on January 8th, we were addressed by representatives of local civic, athletic, business and homeowner groups. The following Saturday, individual members of the public were invited to address the Panel or to phone in to discuss their ideas or concerns regarding parks, recreational facilities and open space. On January 22nd, Panel members spent the morning and early afternoon visiting actual park facilities.

The Panel has used the information it has researched and gathered to reach certain General Findings, Recommendations, and Funding Recommendations. Those will be presented to you this evening. Greg White will present the General Findings, Dolly Carl will present the Recommendations, and Mirna Stanley will present the Funding Recommendations. Mary Boger will close our presentation.

GENERAL FINDINGS

1. The City of Glendale has insufficient parks, recreation facilities and open space.
2. The City of Glendale has an inequitable distribution of parks, recreation facilities and open space.
3. Insufficiencies of parks, recreation facilities and open space have a negative impact on the quality of life for residents of this city.
4. Lack of recreation opportunities creates urban decay and contributes to policing and social costs.
5. The social, economic and environmental impacts of high density are mitigated by parks, recreation facilities and open space.
6. The insufficiency of libraries, parks, recreation facilities and open space in our city has been evident for several years. Studies and surveys completed by the city indicate libraries, parks, recreation facilities and open space are valued by this community as contributing to the quality of life of its citizens. Further, prior discoveries show that current conditions are long standing and require the immediate attention of city officials and citizens. These discoveries are reflected in the City of Glendale's Recreation and Open Space Elements of the General Plan.
7. The growth in Glendale's population, the upsurge in women's sports, the increasing involvement of adult participants and the expansion in the diversity of recreational activities has created a significant increase in the demand for parks and recreational facilities.

8. The increase in use of City recreational resources is reducing the life span of existing facilities, limiting public availability, and increasing facility maintenance and repair costs.
9. The southern portion of Glendale has experienced significant population growth that has contributed to an inadequate ratio of parks, recreational facilities and open space in that area of the city.
10. Historically the city's allocation of funds for parks, recreation facilities and open space has been insufficient to meet the increasing demand of its population.
11. The City's General Plan Open Space, Recreation and Conservation Element, adopted in 1972, and the Recreation Element, adopted in 1996, have not been fully implemented.
12. Current zoning and subdivision laws for commercial, retail, residential and industrial development do not adequately provide for open and green space.
13. Every neighborhood is important to the overall health of the City of Glendale; however, the City has not equitably invested in all of its neighborhoods in the development of parks, recreational facilities and open space.
14. Our city does not compare well when matched to cities of comparable size and resources. This deficiency is the result of unbridled growth, which was not met with a corresponding increase in park, recreation facility and open space resources.
15. The City is not currently optimizing all potential outside public and private funding opportunities to acquire and/or develop parks, recreation facilities and open space.
16. The City and its Redevelopment Agency have an inventory of vacant and underutilized properties that should be evaluated for use as interim and permanent recreational facilities.
17. The City has successfully initiated some strategies to optimize the use of its parks and recreational facilities that could be expanded to further extend the capacity of its recreational resources.
18. The City has successfully instituted public/private and public/public partnerships as a means of economically and effectively expanding its recreational resources. These partnerships could be broadened to increase the availability of recreational resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In keeping with the primary findings of the Panel: The City of Glendale has an insufficiency of parks, recreational facilities and open space, and that these insufficiencies impact the quality of life in our City. The Blue Ribbon Panel on Parks, Recreation Facilities and Open Space makes the following recommendations:

The Panel finds the needs of the residents of Recreation Planning Areas 5 through 10 and the western most part of Recreation Planning Area 3 to be critical, and recommends:

- 1. The city must acquire properties in these services areas. These properties must be acquired for use in providing no fewer than five (5) {minimum 1/2-acre} mini parks, two (2) {minimum 5-acre} neighborhood parks including the Town Center Park, and one (1) {minimum 10 acre} community park.**

The Panel finds it to be a high priority that the City should use City owned property to reduce the cost of addressing these critical needs, and recommends:

- 2. The creation a large central park on the property commonly referred to as the “Town Center” of a minimum of 7 acres.**

The Panel finds that open space in our surrounding hillsides impacts quality of life in our City and because open space may mitigate the impacts of high density, recommends:

- 3. The city must acquire open space in the Verdugo, San Rafael and San Gabriel Mountains, a minimum of 200 acres in the immediate future and a target of 400 acres by 2010. The City must provide adequate funds to maximize use of these open spaces.**

The Panels finds that there is an inequity in the distribution of recreational facilities, and recommends:

- 4. The parks called for in Recommendation one (1) must be planned to provide a minimum of two (2) gymnasiums and one (1) swimming pool. They must provide a broad range of recreational opportunities, e.g. roller hockey and other skate park activities, ice-skating, soccer, baseball fields, dog parks, bike paths, volleyball and basketball courts. One of these facilities, to be located in the southeast part of the city should incorporate a neighborhood library.**

The Panel believes it to be imperative to address the need for parks, recreation facilities and open space in the most timely and cost effective way, and recommends:

- 5. The Council direct the City Manager to provide a listing of the City’s property holdings and that each City owned property be reviewed for potential use as park land, or for its potential value as exchange property. That included in this listing must be all Glendale Redevelopment Agency property, City owned reservoirs,**

landfills and parking lots. Because of the cost of acquiring land, the City must be open to some use of its most widely held properties - public thoroughfares (streets, sidewalks, alleys, etc.).

The Panel finds that historically there have been insufficient funds for park land acquisition and maintenance, and recommends:

- 6. The City must allocate sufficient funds to upgrade all existing parks and facilities and in future budget planning, provide adequate funds to maintain existing and future parks.**

The Panel finds that the residents of this City may not be fully aware of the impact the lack of parks, recreation facilities, and open space does and will have on the quality of life for all Glendale residents, and recommends:

- 7. The City Council should educate the public on the importance of adequate parks and open space and their resultant impact on the economic, social, and environmental quality of life for all residents of the City of Glendale.**

Further, to minimize future development from having a negative impact on these quality of life issues, the Panel recommends:

- 8. The City Council review and increase requirements for open as well as green space in zoning and subdivision laws. This Panel also believes that every residential, commercial, industrial, and governmental development must reflect an increased requirement for green space.**

The Panel finds that increased collaborative efforts must be a part of the City's short and long range planning with regard to maximizing available moneys for parks, recreation facilities and open space, and therefore recommends:

- 9. The City must seek to increase the collaborative efforts with the Glendale Unified School District, Glendale Community College as well as other private and public entities, including, but not limited to private for profit enterprises and not for profit agencies and foundations. Likewise, it must make the maximum use of collaborative efforts between all city agencies, for example between parks and libraries, between parks and police, between parks and public service.**

The Panel finds that the City must increase its cooperative efforts to "green up" the city, and therefore recommends:

- 10. The City Council must direct all city divisions to work toward increasing developed green space in the city.**

And the Panel recommends:

11. The City must strive to, at minimum, meet, and at best, exceed the park land standards of 6 acres per 1000 population as set forth in the Recreation Element of the General Plan as follows:

- **2 acres per 1000 population by 2010**
- **3 acres per 1000 population by 2020**
- **4 acres per 1000 population by 2030**
- **5 acres per 1000 population by 2040**
- **6 acres per 1000 population by 2050**

Further the Panel recommends:

12. The City be vigilant in preserving public access to resources such as mountains and streambeds.

The Panel suggests that the City Council instruct city staff to be aware of the need to consider in their longest range planning, that the use of linear recreation corridors (e.g. flood control channels and freeway air space) which may one day be economically feasible and that this City should stand ready to use those areas and more particularly, be ready to take advantage of grants and other moneys which may be available for that purpose.

And finally:

The Panel strongly suggests that the progress of the City towards meeting these recommendations be reviewed annually.

FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel recommends diligent pursuit of a variety of funding sources, including development fees, utilization of a portion of any City budget surplus, general obligations bonds, etc. The Panel is unable to place a cost on its recommendations because of the location, size, ownership and composition of facilities and timing of projects preclude any estimate. The Panel recommends that the City recognize the need, an urgent need, for parks, recreation facilities and open space and address the deficiencies with actions. The Panel recommends use of the following possible funding sources:

1. Development Impact Fees

The Panel recommends the adoption of park and open space impact fees that would require residential, retail, commercial and industrial developers to pay a fee to offset costs of park and recreation facilities infrastructure. Over 300 cities and counties throughout California have adopted ordinances of this nature as a means to mitigate the impact of development.

2. Fiscal Year Budget Surplus

The Panel recommends the City Council adopt by resolution a policy to allocate 25% of any fiscal year budget surplus for acquisition of parks and open space and the upgrading to existing facilities.

3. General Obligation Bond

The Panel recommends that the City Council allocate funds for the purpose of polling the electorate and researching the feasibility of a general obligation bond election.

4. General Fund Increase for Maintenance

The City Council must dedicate a larger percentage of the General Fund be utilized for the maintenance of parks and open space, without negatively impacting libraries.

5. Corporate Sponsorships

The Panel recommends the City Council direct staff to develop an aggressive program to encourage opportunities for corporate sponsorships.

6. Public and Private Grants

The Panel recommends the City Council appropriate additional resources to fund a grant development program.

7. Park Foundation

The Panel recommends the City Council direct staff and the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission to facilitate the establishment of a “Glendale Parks Foundation” as an independent not-for-profit organization.

8. Public/Public Partnerships

The Panel recommends the City Council direct staff to actively explore joint use with other public entities of recreational resources. This exploration should include joint planning, grant writing and shared development of facilities of a regional nature.

9. Public/Private Partnerships

The Panel recommends the City Council direct staff to work with private entities in the planning, design, construction and management of recreation resources. Examples of these partnerships would be: A private business could permit surface parking lots or other spaces to be used for recreational activities. Another example of a public/private partnership would be the City’s contract with American Golf, which operates the golf course at Scholl Canyon. These relationships should stimulate private investment in the community’s recreational infrastructure and expand the range of recreational resources available to our residents.

10. Revenue Bonds

The Panel recommends staff explore the potential sale of revenue bonds to fund the development of revenue generating facilities. Revenue bonds are paid from the proceeds of fees levied for the use of facilities such as golf courses, aquatic centers, and batting cages.

11. Land Banking

The Panel recommends the City Council consider the strategic acquisition of land for placement into a land bank, to be exchanged in the future for other recreation land or facilities.

12. Exchange of Land

The City should be vigilant in the pursuit of opportunities where parkland space could be obtained by exchanging City-owned properties.

13. Lease of Property Rights

The Panel recommends aggressively exploring potential leases of property rights of vacant and underutilized City-owned land. Proceeds from those leases should be returned for the acquisition and development of parks and open space areas.

14. Attachment to and Use of GRA Tax Increment Funds

The Panel recommends the Council aggressively pursue attachment to and use of Glendale Redevelopment Tax Increment Funds.

CONCLUSION

It is customary to have begun a presentation such as this one with thanks and commendations to those people who have been instrumental in the preparation of the document. I have waited until now because I wanted you to have a clear idea of the amount of work that has been accomplished by this Panel. The Panel members themselves are deserving of your thanks for their volunteer hours, given freely and most times at the end of a regular working day. It should also be recognized that many of the Panel members gave of their expertise for which they would have been well paid in their professional lives. The Panel members have given in excess of 500 hours over the past fourteen weeks. While some of the appointees were unable to regularly attend the meetings, others have never missed a single one including our Saturdays at City Hall or on the Bee Line visiting our parks.

We would like to express our thanks to the many officers of local civic, athletic, and business organizations who came and spoke to us, telling us about their ideas, concerns, and visions for parks, recreational facilities and open space. And thanks also to those who came forward as individuals, or called us or wrote to us. We appreciated their input.

Our thanks to Jim Brown of the Glendale Unified School District and Dr. John Davitt of Glendale Community College for sharing their knowledge and time with us. And also to Jeanne Armstrong, Director of Development Services, who walked us through the maps of both Redevelopment corridors and graciously shared with us the intricacies of redevelopment law.

Rorie Skei of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy provided us information about open and urban space conservation and improvement. Representatives from Congressman Rogan, State Senator Adam Schiff and Supervisor Mike Antonovich's offices gave us funding information.

Assembly member Scott Wildman came personally to participate in the evening's discussions with regard to funding available from outside of our city. Our gratitude to all of them.

Likewise, Park, Recreation and Community Services Commissioners Julie Shermer, Hank Scheetz, Charles Mason, Claudia Culling and Commission President Ann Ransford were kind enough to attend our meetings and to answer our questions, walk us through the extensive work which they had already done and the documents which they had compiled. We are very grateful for their dedication. Our City can take pride in having residents who are so willing to go above and beyond their appointed tasks.

Mr. Rod Carter and Mr. Richard Clark from Sutro and Company were so kind as to come and instruct us regarding bonds and other funding mechanisms, as well as to provide us with extensive documentation.

City staff members, Mr. Jim Starbird, City Manager, Mr. Scott Howard, City Attorney and Mr. Bob Franz, Director of Finance, were most helpful and most patient. We appreciate their willingness to spend long evenings with us and answer never ending questions. Laurel Patric, Director of Libraries, was a faithful attendee and was generous with her advice and expertise, for which we would like to express our gratitude.

Our thanks to Sabrina Thomas and Adam Goodwin from Cable Channel 6. Don Zabinski, Administrative Analyst from the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Division who shared information with us about grants.

Scott Reese, Assistant Director of Parks did double duty as a Parks and Recreation regular at our meetings and, going the extra mile, as a pinch hitter for the call-in cable program. Alina Morshidian, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Administrative Analyst, was the quiet voice who sat beside me through all of our many meetings, faithful, helpful and always keeping me on track. It was truly our pleasure to work with both of you. Please accept our thanks once again.

And last, but by no means least, Mr. Nello Iacono, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Service. I am certain that you do not need to be reminded that Mr. Iacono represents this City in an exemplary fashion. He was unfailingly generous with his encouragement, his expertise and his patience. We thank you for that Nello, but also for allowing us to set our own course and willingly aiding us in reaching whatever destination we had a mind.

We have all worked hard. We have all been dedicated to providing you the best possible guidance in regard to an issue for which we realize there are no easy answers.

However, we would remind you that our findings are matters of fact. The southern portion of Glendale is densely populated. The southern portion of Glendale does not have adequate parks. Parks, recreation facilities and open space mitigate the impacts of high density. Lack of recreational opportunities creates urban decay, which contribute to the policing and social costs of a city. Many of the multiple family dwellings in this city are approaching 20 to 30 years of age. Many of those properties are owned by persons who do not live in our city and whose only

interest in their property is a financial one. If this city is going to maintain and improve our neighborhoods, we must make palatable to those non-residential property owners the prospect of investing in the renovation, maintenance, and improvement of their buildings. Creating neighborhoods, which will draw families interested in a high quality of life for themselves and their children, is a positive action that this city must take. Parks improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods and help to assure property owners that further investment in their rental properties is a wise financial move. Every area of this city is important to the overall health of this city. Therefore, this City must invest appropriately to protect all of its neighborhoods from deterioration.

Because of the cost of acquiring land, the City must not lose any opportunity to use its own property or property to which it could have direct access, to undertake the immediate expansion of our parkland. It would be penny wise and pound foolish to squander an opportunity to create a park on City owned or controlled property.

One of Glendale's most charming aspects and therefore one of its most valuable assets is and should continue to be its vistas of open space. This Council must take every action to preserve any and all open spaces available to it. Delay will only increase the cost, and failure to act is a price far too high to pay. It is not a legacy we should leave to our children.

We were pleased to see the Council call for a review of zoning laws. We applaud the New Press editorial, which commended your action and called for you to act promptly. New zoning and subdivision laws must bring a sense of greening and spaciousness to every development: commercial, retail, residential or industrial. No building should exist in this city that does not provide adequate green space to compensate for concrete or black top and adequate open space to relieve the sense of crowding.

The information, which we have presented to you this evening, is not intended as a criticism of you or your predecessors. The long history of financial conservatism in this city has, unfortunately, lead to an under investment in some of the elements which define a city as a favored place to live and raise a family. We may never be able to completely remedy the problems of over building or increased density, but we must begin to address the resultant social, economic, and environmental impacts.

Some of the recommendations we have brought tonight may be distasteful to you as individuals; they may in fact be bitter pills to swallow. But as members of the Glendale City Council your decisions must be based not upon what you would like to do, but rather what you must do in the best interests of this City. For too many years the Parks and Open Space issue has received insufficient priority. We know the reality of City budgets. However, you have charged us to look at this specific issue. The message we bring you tonight is that parks, recreation facilities and open space is an issue, which has been too long ignored and has reached critical mass. You must not let the cost of what is needed dissuade you or use those costs as a reason to wring your hands in despair and fail to take action. Progress must be made. We would remind you that being fiscally conservative does not mean failing to spend the money to fix a leaking roof. Any successful business person will tell you that there are times when you must invest in order to

protect your assets. You must be willing to make these decisions, which define courageous leadership in critical times.

We believe your first step may well be the implementation of Developer Fees. It is time that Glendale moved into the twenty first century and took its place along side such cities as Anaheim, Arcadia, Beverly Hills, Brentwood, Burbank, Calabasas, Capitola, Dana Point, Fountain Valley, Glendora, Grass Valley, Huntington Beach, Irvine, Laguna Niguel, Malibu, Mission Viejo, Newport Beach, San Clemente, San Juan Capistrano, Thousand Oaks, Tustin, Walnut Creek, or Whittier, all of whom, to name only a very few, have developer fees. It has been said that developers are already paying fees to the school district. Quite true. Developers impact the school district. They also impact this city and its ability to provide needed services, such as parks and recreation facilities. Where there is impact there must be mitigation. An editorial in the Glendale News Press indicated that it might be unfair to expect business to pay this fee, as there are an inadequate number of new homes being built to cause residents to pay their share. I would invite that editor to walk my neighborhood with me. Rarely does a home change hands in my area that it is not immediately remodeled to some extent. This City, its businesses and residents must stand shoulder to shoulder and accept this cost. To quote Ben Franklin's immortal words: "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

You must take every action, avail yourselves of every opportunity, and work diligently to make every resident of our city aware of the importance of this issue. As leaders of our community, it is your responsibility to do so.

The message which you would send to the residents and property owners of this community by establishing a policy of using a portion of any budget surplus to obtain and maintain parks, recreation facilities and open space, would be a very important beginning. It would state unequivocally the importance which you attach to this issue. It would send a clear message to future Councils of the need to continue to plan and provide for these basic necessities of our community's quality of life.

No one is in favor of taxes. But responsible leaders and citizens are willing to see their tax dollars spent to protect and enhance their primary investments. We believe that the citizens of this city should be given the opportunity to direct the future of their city. They should be given the opportunity to decide for themselves if they are willing to invest in protecting their property values by enhancing the quality of life, reducing policing costs, forestalling urban decay, addressing the inequities in our parks and recreation facilities and preserving open spaces in Glendale.

A plain spoken man from a small town in Missouri once sat in an oval office in Washington, DC. Upon his desk sat a now well remembered plaque. It said simply, "The Buck Stops Here". It is you who must act. We have presented you with facts regarding the current critical status of parks, recreation facilities and open space in Glendale. We have told you what research shows to be the necessary actions to deal with this critical issue. We believe that these are things, which must be done. The cost will only grow if you do nothing. The leadership, which this Council demonstrates in the face of this information, may very well determine the health and prosperity of our City in so short a span of time as the next ten years.

Walter Lippmann wrote: “The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men the conviction and the will to carry on . . .The genius of a good leader is to leave behind him a situation which common sense, without the grace of genius, can deal with successfully.” We challenge you this evening to be such leaders. To face squarely this critical issue and take the actions necessary to protect our community now and tomorrow.

Thank you for very kind attention to our presentation this evening. I have a request to make. It is our understanding that there may exist a conflict for one member of the Council in regard to the discussion of Recommendation number two. We would appreciate your discussing that individual item first and exclusively from other findings, recommendations or funding recommendations.