Public Open Space

“Require the presence of public open space within a ¼ mile radius of proposed higher density centers and corridors. Acquire private land to convert to public open space such as neighborhood parks and pocket parks.”

The COA Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) Master Plan identifies areas in the urban core that lack adequate open space and parkland. The COA should aggressively acquire parkland in each council district. Urban infill parks may be much smaller than parks in suburban areas and the purchase of private land for neighborhood parks (from 2-10 acres) and pocket parks (up to 2 acres) may be the most appropriate. Staff should identify potential locations and estimate the cost of acquisitions to inform the city’s annual budget and/or a future bond packages. New parkland needs to be provided in deficient centers and corridors prior to increasing density through a mapping of the new land development code.

“Require parkland dedication on-site, especially in areas of the city that are identified in the Parks Master Plan as deficient in open space and parks.”

Given that there are areas in the urban core that are deficient in open space, new urban infill projects should be required to include parkland. The parkland should be on-site and options to pay fee-in-lieu should not be allowed, since the collection of adequate funds may take too long and may not be sufficient to actually purchase parkland in the urban core.

Private Open Space

“Maintain or increase the existing 5% Private Open Space ordinance in Commercial and Multifamily zones and extend a private open space requirement into new ‘Transition Zones’ that are planned for redevelopment or up-zoning.”

Permeable ground cover on private open space provides critical contributions to public safety and health. Most valuably, it provides areas for the infiltration of stormwater, which contributes to the prevention of downstream flooding and to the recharge of area aquifers. Permeable areas that are heavily vegetated also slow the flow of water at the surface, further helping the process of infiltration. Private open space also helps preserve existing tree canopies, which mitigate heat island effects and provide for social gathering places.
Public and Private Open Space

“Establish a minimum of 30% pervious area in all required open space and provide a nuanced code that recognizes soil characteristics and soil volumes to retain stormwater. Require a minimum soil depth (using existing or existing plus imported soil) in pervious areas to retain on-site stormwater.”

In San Francisco, it has been determined that 30% pervious area provide an appropriate balance of green, softscape to hardscape in designated open space areas to capture rainfall. Area requirements, though, are not enough. Precipitation patterns, soil characteristics, and soil volume must also be considered. In Seattle, 24” soil depth is incentivized through that city's Green Factor ordinance. Western parts of Travis County have shallower soils than those in the east. While we might not be able to establish a uniform depth requirement across the county, we should be able set requirements by localized conditions. Stakeholder discussion is needed to determine the most appropriate soil depths in the new code.