

THE IMPORTANCE OF LAND

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It should be noted that dams and reservoirs, regardless of the purposes for which they were created, or the draw-down of such dams and reservoirs, are considered inappropriate in areas of the National Park System.

The question of preservation of open spaces was the topic for discussion at a workshop session of the American Institute of Planners. A number of questions were posed and discussed, and the following statements indicate the consensus of opinion regarding some:

1. Should public open spaces be considered as vacant lands subject to a "higher use" if one appears?

Answer: Public open spaces when being used for a beneficial purpose or held for such use in the *near future*, for uses which require open out-of-door space, must not be considered as vacant land, for there can be no higher use than beneficial out-of-door activities.

2. Under what circumstances should open reservations be subject to military (and restricted) uses?

Answer: Public land reservations for beneficial out-of-door activities should not be appropriated for military purposes except in a *grave* national emergency, and should be returned in its original condition within one year or less after the emergency is past.

3. Should public buildings be placed in public parks?

Answer: Only such public buildings as are *necessary* for the fulfillment of the primary purposes of parks, playgrounds, reservations should be permitted. All others should be strictly excluded and should be on their own sites, properly located for ease of public access and use.

4. Should existing public open spaces be appropriated for school buildings?

Answer: See answer to Question 3. In the new design called park-schools, providing for a close cooperation between park board and school board, the school building and its accessory areas should be *added* to and not *subtracted* from any existing play park to which it will be adjacent.

5. Should expressways for multiple-type traffic be located in existing parkways or through park lands in order to save land and construction costs or to simplify engineering?

Answer: This is a most serious issue facing our urban people. Admitting the grave necessity of expressways into and through urban areas, they must be located where they will be most *convenient* and effective. Cost is definitely a secondary consideration. And shifting location to save a few thousand dollars by

using public park land is short-sighted and stupid. However, if parks are definitely in the line of the best location and *no other* location is possible, the park board must be liberally compensated for the loss of valuable park recreation land to enable replacement to be made where most needed. Taking such land without such compensation is reprehensible management.

6. Should reservoirs for irrigation, flood control or power where a heavy draw-down occurs in summer be placed in existing city, state or national park lands?

Answer: Irrigation, flood control or power reservoirs where a heavy draw-down occurs should not be located in existing or planned park lands, unless a grave danger exists from floods, from drought, and if no other feasible site can be found. Power reservoirs can be permitted only if a power shortage is present in the community with no other source available, and this only if a draw-down of not more than two feet is allowed. In primitive or natural scenic parks, of state or national governments, none of the above can be permitted. Only artificial lakes for recreation use maintained at constant level are permissible in state, county and city landscape parks.

7. Should so-called port or navigation districts take over lake or harbor fronts in public parks lands where private frontage is available without replacing for public use an equal amount of lake frontage within the metropolitan area?

Answer: No.

8. Should military or veterans' hospitals be considered a higher use than open space parks?

Answer: No--both are important for safety, health, and welfare, but a hospital should be in its own specially adapted site, which may overlook, but not be in, public-use park land.

9. Should public agencies acquire open spaces in advance of needs in ostensibly growing areas?

Answer: Yes--definitely. But only in conformity with a definite, well-considered plan for recreation areas and among all levels of government, so that the citizens and the courts, if necessary, understood fully the necessity of this advance acquisition. Requiring all new subdivisions to allocate five to eight per cent of land for park purposes is not workable unless the urban authorities can accept cash or lands to increase ownership where needed.

