



## NOLA Parks for All POLICY INITIATIVES

### APPENDIX II

#### PROPOSAL FOR NEW LAND USE CATEGORIES REGARDING NATURAL AREAS, PARKS AND OTHER GREEN SPACES

NOLA Parks for All (“PFA”) recommends that the City Planning Commission (CPC) and City Council commence a Master Plan (MP) amending process to establish new separate land use categories for Natural Areas, Open Space, and Recreational Areas. Each land use category should be defined separately within Volume 2, Chapter 14 of the MP, as proposed in PFA’s amendment recommendations, and the categories should be applied to characterize land falling within these definitions as separate land uses in the Future Land Use Map (FLUM), Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO), and other related land use maps with the force of law. In addition, to maximize the effectiveness of these new definitions, PFA urges the CPC, Council, and the Mayor to create formal processes requiring thorough public review and approval for projects beyond permitted uses within the areas so designated.

PFA acknowledges that any changes to how public property is marked in the FLUM and other official land use maps should be made through a transparent and inclusive process conducted by local governmental entities. To the extent that the MP already differentiates between “Natural Areas,” “Parkland,” and “Open Spaces” in Volume 2, Chapter 14, Section C, PFA recommends the text changes set out below to more accurately capture the types of public green space throughout the City and the important conservation and range of use differences among those categories.

It is important to identify and delineate existing Open Space to prevent the loss of that space to public and private economic interests that would develop or limit access to public property that had long been freely used by all citizens. As the Master Plan notes, “Cities that give up park land end up regretting it. . . When cities looking for “free land” establish other public facilities on park land, they are chipping away at the community’s overall inventory of park land.” By identifying and mapping natural public space, we can better identify and track losses of open space, note additions to the inventory of public green space, and protect public green space from conversion to commercial or intensive uses.

In addition to urging that officials commence a redrawing of the FLUM, CZO, and other land use maps for purposes of better delineating the City's public green spaces, the following text definitions are recommended to replace existing content with the "Open Space and Recreation" subsection of Volume 2, Chapter 14, Section C of the MP (pgs.

14.16 -14.17):

## **NATURAL AREAS**

Goal: Increase, retain and preserve coastal land, wetlands, woodlands, and other ecologically sensitive habitats and natural areas by conserving, improving, and/or restoring these areas for the purposes of aesthetic value, biodiversity, natural disaster resilience, natural resource and wildlife conservation, and nature-oriented recreation.

Range of Uses: Ecological management, green infrastructure (non-structural flood protection and stormwater management), and passive nature-based recreation that does not have adverse impacts on sensitive ecological and natural areas that are the conservation/preservation aim in any particular designated Natural Area. (Other uses may be allowed with conditional permit and restoration requirements.)

Development Character: No structures except those necessary to support specific conservation aims or low-impact amenities consistent with permitted passive recreational activities (i.e., trails, trailheads, overlooks, rest areas, and interpretive signage).

## **OPEN SPACE**

Goal: Provide, increase and maintain areas for public spaces owned by public or semi-public entities that are conserved, improved, or restored as green space for the purpose of providing aesthetic, contemplative, educational, environmental, public health, passive recreational, and resilience values to the community.

Range of Uses: Grassy spaces, green infrastructure (bioswales, rain gardens, etc.), natural fields, neutral grounds, passive recreational fields, and non-programmed park space. Other permitted uses could include removable or temporary markings and/or fixtures for permitted recreational activities (i.e., stripes, removable goal nets, etc.); pedestrian and bike trails constituting less than 25% of the surface area of the area constituting Open Space; or other minor installations (i.e., water fountains, restrooms) provided that any such added features do not interfere or diminish the stated aims of the designated Open Space within prevailing Master Plans for that space. (Uses having more than minimal impact not allowed or allowed only with conditional permit.)

Development Character: No structures except those necessary to support specific conservation and/or resilience aims or low-impact amenities

consistent with permitted recreational activities (i.e., trails, rest areas, signage, water fountains).

## **RECREATIONAL AREAS**

Goal: Provide areas for programmable parks and active recreational facilities owned by public or semi-public entities that also advance community goals for community access and equity, conservation, natural aesthetics, and storm water protection, and resilience.

Range of Uses: Parks, playgrounds, recreation facilities, and temporary and permanent athletic fields and facilities, including but not limited to golf courses, tennis courts, paved trails comprising more than 25% of the surface area of a particular park or discrete public space.\*

Development Character: Programmatic parks, indoor and outdoor recreational areas, and other minimal structures, as considered and vetted by the public, in furtherance of the principal use of a particular parkland space.

\* Footnote: Stadiums and permanent large community-benefiting structures be considered as Institutional land use categories (pg.14.16), subject to conditional use approval processes for inclusion.

*NOLA Parks For All*