

years. Designed to accommodate approximately 45,000 people a month, the park has instead been drawing fewer than 10,000, often less than 5,000. Nevertheless, a majority of the council members say they are convinced that Foothill Park's pristine ambience could be savaged if Ron Andersen has his way. "I strongly oppose changing the policy," then-Mayor Mike Cobb opined, leading the successful opposition to Andersen's initiative. Instead, the council will soon consider an alternative proposal: offering periodic "neighbors days" when residents of selected local communities may be offered limited access to the park.

"My biggest disappointment was the fact that local environmental groups did not line up in support of my proposal," Andersen reflects. He says he now believes it is "unlikely" Palo Alto will ever voluntarily change the admissions policy.

"I think that what will happen is that eventually we will get sued over this, and we'll lose," Andersen says, adding that Palo Alto's unusual policy on park admissions has never been tested in court. After his motion to explore opening the park failed, Andersen tried to convince his colleagues to ask for an opinion from the city attorney to determine whether Palo Alto has any proper legal basis for its exclusive approach. That motion died for lack of a second. But if Ron Andersen is right, it's only a matter of time before Palo Alto's city attorney has to face that question—in court.