



Planning Commission Staff Report

Date: May 24, 2006
Item 6a

SUBJECT: General Plan Update – Draft Conservation and Open Space Element

PURPOSE: Review and consider the Draft Conservation and Open Space Element; provide direction to staff for any amendments prior to City Council review

I. BACKGROUND

General Plans are required to include both a conservation and an open space element. Because most natural resources are located in open space land, the Pleasanton General Plan combines these two State-mandated elements into one element. According to State law, the Conservation Element must provide direction regarding conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources including (as appropriate) water, forests, soils, surface waters, fisheries, wildlife, minerals, and other natural resources. The Open Space Element must guide preservation and conservation of “open space land,” which is defined as any public or private land or water that is unimproved and devoted to open-space use. Under State law, the Element should address the following four types of open space: preservation of natural resources, managed production of natural resources, outdoor recreation, and public health and safety.

The 1996 General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element includes background information related to (1) an inventory of existing resources including animal and plant life, soils, water resources, sand and gravel, and historic resources; (2) open space lands including parks and recreation, agriculture and grazing, public health and safety, and wildlands overlay; (3) and a description of future plans and programs for existing resources and open space lands. The General Plan also contains goals, policies and programs related to natural resources, open space, cultural and historic resources, sand and gravel, agriculture, water quality, parks and recreation, and health and safety hazards.

The proposed revisions to the General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element are the result of review of the 1996 Element by the Operations Services Center, Parks/Community Services, Public Works/Engineering, and Planning Department staff. In addition, the Parks and Recreation Commission reviewed the sections related to open space at its meeting on April 13, 2006. Parks and Recreation Commission comments are included in the draft Element.

Attachments 1 and 2 provide marked-up and clean copies (respectively) of the Draft Element.

II. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO THE 1996 CONSERVATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

In summary, the proposed changes to the background text of the Draft Conservation and Open Space Element include:

- General editing, updating and reorganizing of background material from the 1996 General Plan. This includes changing the three sections of the original element into two new sections: “Resource Conservation” and “Open Space Lands,” while deleting “Description of Future Plans and Programs” and consolidating its relevant information into the new “Resource Conservation” section. The reason for consolidating the third section with the first two is to eliminate repetitious discussion.
- Adding a discussion on Sustainability.
- Updating “Animal Life” to include a discussion of changes to Department of Fish and Game Species of Special Concern and federal-listed animal species that live in the Planning Area; updating the table about animals to only list potential wildlife species of concern; and including more information about birds, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates.
- Updating “Plant Life” to make changes to Department of Fish and Game’s Sensitive Plant Species; updating the table about plants to only list potential rare, threatened, or endangered plant species in the Planning Area; and updating information about vegetative areas such as grasslands, brushland, and woodland, and expanding this discussion to include transitional plant areas, wetland, and riparian corridor areas.
- Expanding the “Soil Resources” discussion, including describing the function of healthy soils, and adding information about farmland soil, soil types for groundwater recharge, and soil support structures.
- Changing “Groundwater” to “Water Resources” and adding discussion of arroyos, reservoirs, and the Chain of Lakes.
- Moving and updating “Water Quality” and “Stormwater Runoff” water quality issues from the Public Facilities Element to this element under the new “Water Resources” topic.
- Updating the “Sand and Gravel” discussion and moving the “Sand and Gravel” discussion from the former third section of this element into the new “Resource Conservation” section; and adding discussion of the *Specific Plan for the Livermore-Amador Valley Quarry Area Reclamation* and discussion of how the Chain of Lakes is planned as a reclamation area.
- Updating “Historic Resources” discussion and moving “Historic Resources” discussion from the former third section of this element into the new “Resource Conservation” section; and updating the list of historic structures and adding new information about historic neighborhoods by incorporating information from the 2002 *Downtown Specific Plan*.

- Adding a discussion about archaeological resources.
- Moving the paragraph on neighborhood and community parks from the “Parks and Recreation” topic of the “Open Space Lands” section into the Public Facilities Element.
- Renaming “Parks and Recreation” topic of the “Open Space Lands” section to “Recreational Open Space;” updating information in the “Recreational Open Space” section, including updating and incorporating the paragraph on “Open Space Land Used for Outdoor Recreation” from the former third section of this element, and referencing the new Water Management and Recreation designation.
- Adding information about Pleasanton’s designated open spaces: Bonde Ranch, Callippe Preserve, Gold Creek, Mission Hills, and Augustin Bernal Park.
- Updating and adding information about Pleasanton’s “Open Space Trails,” including plans to connect these trails to other Pleasanton and regional trails.
- Adding new discussion on “Scenic Highways” and “Water Management and Recreation.”
- Updating information in the “Agriculture and Grazing” topic of the “Open Space Lands” section, including updating and incorporating the paragraph on “Agriculture and Grazing” from the former third section of this element; and adding information about wildlife in agricultural areas and a new section on “Farmlands” that includes discussion of *Williamson Act* lands and that defines farmlands.
- Updating information in the “Public Health and Safety” topic of the “Open Space Lands” section, including updating and incorporating the paragraph on “Open Space Land Used for Public Health and Safety” from the former third section of this element; and adding information about geologic and geotechnical concerns in these areas.
- Updating information in the “Wildlands Overlay” topic of the “Open Space Lands” section, including updating and incorporating the paragraphs on “Open Space Land Used for Wildlands” from the former third section of this element.
- Adding discussion about the relationship of the Conservation and Open Space Element to the Land Use Element, the Circulation Element, the Public Safety Element, and the Public Facilities Element.

Staff recommends the following changes to the Goals, Policies and Programs in the Draft Conservation and Open Space Element:

- Adding a general goal on sustainability.
- Editing Program 1.6 and adding Programs 1.7-1.11 to further preserve habitat areas, to provide additional wildlife habitat areas, and support appropriate development intensity adjacent to Wildlands Overlay.
- Editing Program 2.1 so that people may more readily find information about heritage trees.
- Moving and updating “Water Quality” goal, policies, and programs after “Natural Resources;” expanding Program 4.2 (former Program 9.2) to include more discussion of

pollutants; updating Program 4.3 (former Program 9.3) to continue monitoring well water; clarifying Program 4.4 (former Program 9.4); adding Program 4.5 to coordinate with Zone 7 to reduce pollution and Program 4.6 to prohibit new septic systems that could impact water resources; clarifying Programs 4.7 and 4.8 (former Programs 9.6 and 9.5, respectively); clarifying Policy 5 and Programs 5.3 and 5.4 (former Policy 10 and Programs 10.3 and 10.4, respectively); moving former Programs 10.5 to 10.8 to the Public Facilities Element; and updating Program 5.5 (former Program 10.9).

- Adding Goal 4 to reduce stormwater runoff and maximize infiltration, and Policy 6 and its programs to minimize impervious surfaces in the built environment, consistent with the requirements of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES).
- Moving and updating “Clean Water Program” former Policy 17 and its programs from the Public Facilities Element into this Element as Policy 7 and its programs; and adding Program 7.11 to establish sedimentation and erosion standards and Program 7.12 to maintain and monitor water quality improvement facilities.
- Moving and updating Goal 5 (former Goal 2) under “Sand and Gravel” to specifically address aggregate resources; and updating Policy 8 and its programs (former Policy 7 and its programs).
- Adding new Goal 6 under “Cultural and Historic Resources” to protect these resources; deleting former Program 6.1 because preservation of historic resources onsite is the preferred method of conservation; and clarifying Program 9.1 (former Program 6.2).
- Moving “Open Space” and adding new Goal 7 to preserve and protect these lands; clarifying and updating Programs 10.1, 10.4, and 10.7 (former Programs 4.1, 4.5, and 4.9, respectively); deleting former Program 4.2 as it is a repetition of Program 10.6 (former Program 4.7); and moving and expanding former Program 4.8 under new Policy 11 as Program 11.3.
- Adding section “Open Space Parks and Recreation;” adding new Goal 8 for an extensive open space system; adding Policy 11 and its new programs to preserve and expand open space opportunities; updating Policy 12 (former Policy 5) and its programs; and adding new Program 12.3 for scenic highways.
- Moving “Parks and Recreation” section into the Public Facilities Element.
- Adding new Goal 9 to expand and maintain a trail system; expanding and clarifying Policy 13 (former Policy 12); moving former Programs 12.1, 12.2, and 12.4 to the Circulation Element; clarifying Program 13.1 (former Program 12.3); and adding Programs 13.3 to 13.10 to retain, support, and expand the trail systems in Pleasanton.
- Renaming Agriculture to “Agriculture and Grazing;” adding new Goal 10 to promote agriculture; and adding new Programs 14.6 to 14.10 to support agriculture in Pleasanton.
- Renaming “Health and Safety Hazards” to “Public Health and Safety Lands.”
- Deleting “Energy Conservation Section” along with its goal, policy and programs as this is covered in detail in the Energy Element.

The City's Geographic Information System Department has prepared new maps, which are included in the package. These maps incorporate the latest data available from Alameda County, Zone 7 Water Agency, US Department of Agriculture, and other agencies.

III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Review and consider the Draft Conservation and Open Space Element (Attachment 1 and Attachment 2); provide direction to staff for any amendments prior to City Council review.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Conservation and Open Space Element (underline and strikeout)
2. Draft Conservation and Open Space Element (clean copy)
3. Parks and Recreation Commission Minutes, April 13, 2006, Item 7B (Excerpt)

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