

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

General Plan Legislation

The Open Space and Conservation Elements were first required to be part of City and County General Plans in 1970. The focus of this legislation was to underline the importance of protecting open spaces and recreational areas to serve the population for years to come.

Purpose and Function

The Open Space Element designates “open space land”, which is defined by Section 65560(b) of the Government Code, as “any parcel or area of land or water which is essentially unimproved and devoted to open space use.” Open space use, in turn, is defined to encompass four principle categories: natural resources; managed production of resources; outdoor recreation; and public health and safety.

The Conservation Element is required for the purposes of establishing a management plan for natural resources to prevent waste, destruction or neglect. This element of the General Plan is concerned with the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources such as water, soils, rivers, harbors, wildlife, minerals, and other natural resources.

Relationship of Other General Plan Elements

Within the 2008 General Plan, a Land Use designation was added for Open Space and land within the City has been assigned the Open Space designation. The Conservation Element overlaps those categories of the Open Space Element which deal with “open space for the preservation of natural resources” and “open space for the managed production of resources.” As a result of this overlap and interdependence, the two elements have been combined, which is permitted under State Law.

INVENTORY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

Open Space

The significance of the extensive rolling terrain located in the northeasterly portion of the City and the physical influence of Santiago Creek on the environment and their relation to community development have been carefully assessed. The sparsely developed rolling hills in the eastern and northern sections provide natural barriers accented by landscaping, to help preserve the appearance of a rural, uncluttered City. The primary factor in the City’s setting are the estate-sized lots which allow for dense landscaping, mature trees, and private recreational spaces on private property. With approximately 99% of the

City developed, it becomes increasingly important to focus on environmental enhancement.

There are four schools, shown in **Exhibit V-1**, with outdoor playgrounds totaling approximately 80 acres. There is a competition size swimming pool at Villa Park High School which was funded jointly with the City of Orange, the Orange Unified School District and the City of Villa Park. This pool is utilized during the summer months as a community recreational facility for school activities. Villa Park High School has four lighted tennis courts that are available for public use during non-school hours.

The City has a Master Plan of Recreational Trails, also shown in **Exhibit V-1**, and approximately 50% of the trail system is complete with paths and split rail fencing in some areas and sidewalks in others. The City will continue to develop the trail system, linking areas in the northeast with areas in the southwest of the City to facilitate pedestrian recreational use. While not planned for expansion at this time, there are additional public right-of-way areas which will be reviewed for trail expansion.

Additional property within the City, located within the Santiago Creek Recharge Basin, and also public right-of-way along Wanda Road, commonly known as the Wanda Greenbelt, have been designated as Open Space. These Open Space areas can be found on **Exhibit V-2**.

Conservation

The community of Villa Park relies upon reliable sources of clean water and a safe environment to maintain a high standard of living, both of which are subject to the constant threat of human interference. Through land use controls and the environmental review process, the City can do its part to ensure clean water supplies and a safe environment.

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ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Issues

- There are no public areas of sufficient size and character to develop as active park sites.
- Water supplies within the region are significantly depleted.
- Land development activity may contribute to the degradation of water resources within the region.

Opportunities

- The City has a Master Plan of Recreational Trails to provide recreational opportunities within the city and provides for off-road linkages to the Santiago Creek Green Belt and the Orange County system of recreational trails including the Santa Ana River trails, the Orange County Regional Parks, and nearby Grijalva Park in the City of Orange when fully completed.
- Extensive former sand and gravel mining operations along Santiago Creek adjacent to the southeast boundary of the City are utilized for water reclamation and flood control purposes by the County of Orange and the Orange County Water District. This provides passive open space benefits to the city. The current uses are consistent with goals of the former Santa Ana River/Santiago Creek Greenbelt Commission.
- Passive open space can be enhanced through the use of landscaped medians and parkways.
- The large residential lots in Villa Park and adherence to the maximum lot coverage standard provide substantial private open space.
- Eighty (80) acres within the City's 2.1 square mile area is dedicated for public school purposes as follows:
 - Villa Park High School – 40 acres
 - Cerro Villa Middle School – 20 acres
 - Villa Park Elementary – 10 acres
 - Serrano Elementary – 10 acres

The school sites provide large areas of multi-purpose open space for potential recreational uses by the community including, but not limited to, track and field, swimming, tennis, baseball, soccer, basketball, Physical activity and Recreation (PAR) courses, and community sponsored events.

- There is active community sponsorship of and participation in team sports, utilizing public school sites within the City, nearby schools, and public park sites.
- As part of completed residential developments in the City of Orange, development of recreational trails in the northeasterly portion of Villa Park will be coordinated with those in the City of Orange and the County of Orange.
- Explore feasibility of landscaping/beautification of entrances to the City adjacent to the Santiago Creek greenbelt:
 - 1) The slopes visible from Villa Park Road east of Lemon Street and;
 - 2) The slopes visible from Collins Avenue east of the City limits.

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GOALS, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

OS/Conservation Goal #1: Maintain the City's environmental quality through the preservation and enhancement of open space within and adjacent to the city.

OS/Conservation Policies:

OS/C #1: Look to maximize existing open space facilities for recreational uses.

OS/C #2: Pursue grant funding to complete recreational trail system and recreational amenities where feasible.

OS/C #3: Continue coordination with surrounding City's and the County for the preservation of open space within Villa Park and the regional area.

OS/C #4: Continue to work with the City of Orange and the County of Orange to develop a linked regional recreational trail system.

Action Programs:

1. Complete the master planned recreational trails and feasible recreational amenities with available grant funding and City funding.
2. Enhance the Wanda Greenbelt open space area to promote passive recreational and botanical uses.
3. Work cooperatively with the Orange Unified School District to allow active recreation uses with minimal impacts to residential neighborhoods.
4. Develop recreational trail heads with PAR course amenities.
5. Develop any remaining available City property with trail enhancements.

OS/Conservation Goal #2: Maintain a balance of active and passive open space areas.

OS/Conservation Policies:

OS/C #5: Utilize easements and linear parkways to provide open space.

OS/C #6: Encourage the addition of roadway medians and plantings of street trees to preserve and enhance rural feeling.

Action Programs:

6. Complete landscaped median, recreational trail, and bike lanes project on Lemon Street from Villa Park Road north to Valley Drive.
7. Complete landscaped median project on Taft Avenue, east of Center Drive.
8. Finalize the street tree program.
9. Continue to develop a water sensitive and drought tolerant landscaping program for medians and greenbelt areas to minimize costs and maximize functionality as open space.

OS/Conservation Goal #3: The City will continue to recognize and consider environmental issues in all aspects of land use planning, with special emphasis on groundwater resources, surface water quality, and environmental pollution.

OS/Conservation Policies:

OS/C #7: Protect significant groundwater recharge areas to ensure continued recharge of local groundwater basins.

OS/C #8: Continue to cooperate with water supply agencies to protect the quantity and quality of local groundwater supplies.

OS/C #9: Control surface runoff water discharges into the stormdrain system through enforcement of the City's National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit.

Action Programs:

10. Coordinate drainage plans for development within the City to ensure that major groundwater recharge areas are protected.
11. Maintain publicly owned open space along Santiago Creek to ensure that the existing recharge areas are preserved.
12. Continue to comply with State and Federal regulations for monitoring of domestic water supplies.

13. Continue to require project-specific Water Quality Management Plans (WQMPs) for qualifying projects, pursuant to the City's NPDES Program.

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