

Open Space Element

Thousand Oaks General Plan



CITY OF THOUSAND OAKS

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**Thousand Oaks General Plan
Open Space Element 2013 Update**

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PREFACE

The Thousand Oaks Planning Area encompasses the distinctive and picturesque City of Thousand Oaks, a community nestled in the Conejo Valley, a small coastal valley in the foothills at the northwest end of the Santa Monica Mountains. Thousand Oaks is surrounded by mountains, traversed by creeks and dotted with knolls, hillsides, oak woodlands, and native grasslands. This environment supports diverse wildlife and vegetation habitats, including large mammals, as well as rare and endangered species unique to the local area. In addition, the natural open space system provides important linkages with the surrounding geography. A comprehensive open space plan is vital to assure the conservation of these resources, to protect the integrity of the natural ecosystem, to preserve the natural beauty of the community's natural open space, and to enhance the City's visual character, which also provides a significant economic resource.



Photo 1: Wildwood Mesa, Wildwood Park

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Chapter I

Introduction

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

State law mandates that cities and counties adopt an Open Space Element and an Action Plan to implement the City's goals to preserve open space for the health, safety and welfare of the public. Open space preservation is necessary to maintain the economy of the State, to assure the continued availability of agricultural and mineral resources, for the enjoyment of scenic beauty, and the use and conservation of natural resources and recreational opportunities.

The State Legislature in 1970 realized that rapid growth in the state would put extreme development pressures on cities and counties, and acknowledged that resource conservation must be an active part of a City's General Plan to direct growth away from sensitive ecological areas. Therefore, the legislature adopted Government Code Section 65563 mandating that every city and county prepare and adopt a local open space plan.

The Open Space Element is a tool to carry forth the Thousand Oaks vision to protect open space, direct growth and maintain the community's character and enviable quality of life. This Element identifies the open space resources that should be protected and specific methods to protect them.

Preservation of designated open space areas requires strong controls and a concerted effort to protect them in perpetuity. Only through consistent implementation of a comprehensive Open Space Element, supported by ordinances and other protective measures, can its preservation for future generations of Conejo Valley residents be assured.

Under State law, local government cannot issue any building permit, or approve any subdivision map unless the proposed construction or subdivision is consistent with the local government's Open Space action program. This Element satisfies a State planning law requirement calling for an Open Space Element in all county and city general plans.

A. Purpose of the Open Space Element

The purpose of the Open Space Element is to state the local planning policies for the use of unimproved land or water for: (1) the preservation of natural resources, (2) the managed production of resources, (3) outdoor recreation, and (4) the enhancement of public health and safety. By law, the Open Space Element must also include an inventory of those lands and resources, as well as an "action program." This program must contain specific techniques to protect from the development of both public and private open space lands which are identified as prominent and necessary to achieve the open space policy goals.

B. Definitions and Terminology

State law defines "open space land" as any parcel or area of land or water which is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open space use.

Open Space

Consistent with this intent, the term "open space" shall mean any area designated by the City to preserve the City's natural resources and open space character. Such lands include scenic ridgelines and steeply sloping hillside terrain, arroyos and barrancas, lakes, creeks, riparian vegetation, floodplains, ecologically diverse native plant and animal communities that include rare and endangered species, critical habitat linkages and movement corridors that are necessary for the local and regional linkages and movement corridors important to the dispersal of wildlife populations, farming and grazing, historic and archaeological resources, and passive recreation areas.

Within the local government context, Section 9-13.102(b) of the City's Municipal Code defines City-owned "open space." The following definition, which is hereby incorporated in the Open Space Element as a definition of open space, is patterned after the Municipal Code's definition cited above.

"Open space" land shall mean land which has been designated for the preservation of the surface of that land in essentially an open, natural, and undeveloped state. Open space may contain limited improvements and uses which are compatible and consistent with open space use.

For purposes of applying the policies and implementation programs of this Element, specific land is considered to be "open space" if any one or more of the following apply:

- (1) The deed, recorded tract map, or other instrument transferring the property designates the property as open space, or some document appurtenant to the transfer stipulates that the purpose of the transfer is to maintain the property as open space;
- (2) The City Council declares by resolution that the property is open space. Said resolution may be adopted before, concurrent with, or after the acquisition of the property by a public agency;
- (3) The City Council has placed the property in the Open Space (OS) Zone, as defined by Article 36 of Chapter 4 of this Title.
- (4) The property is to be retained in a natural condition through deed restrictions, conservation easement or other instrument.

Open space is considered a permanent classification which is intended to continue as such in perpetuity without fundamental change. Policy OS-18 provides limitations on changes to open space.

Open Space Element

This section of the City's General Plan is the "Open Space Element." Like other parts of the General Plan, it articulates the City's policies and programs regarding its long-term physical development, in this case pertaining to the topic of open space. State law requires all cities to have General Plans, with specific "elements" to address topics such as land use, circulation, housing, open space, conservation, safety and noise. Cities

may include other elements in their General Plans to address other important local topics related to the long-term physical development of the community.

Open Space Zone

The Open Space (OS) Zone is a specific City zoning district. Like other City zones (e.g. R-1, R-P-D, C-2, M-1), it is defined by a specific Article in the Zoning Ordinance of the Municipal Code, which sets forth regulations regarding permitted uses and development standards for properties located within the zone. Property located within this zone is "zoned Open Space." Properties can be placed in the OS Zone through a zone change, which requires City Council adoption of an ordinance following a public hearing, and consideration and recommendation by the Planning Commission.

Open Space Zoning Ordinance

This is a specific term used in the State law. All cities and counties are required to adopt an "open space zoning ordinance consistent with the [Open Space Element]." As described in Chapter 6, the City's open space zoning ordinance includes the OS Zone, and other regulations which require the preservation of open space in land development, preserve hillsides (Hillside Planned Development (H-P-D) Zone), protect ridgelines (Protected Ridgeline (PR) Overlay Zone), and establish procedural requirements relative to City-owned open space.

Open Space System

The Open Space System is land within the City's Planning Area, comprised of both existing and future natural open space lands and lands which are improved for outdoor recreation purposes, including parks and golf courses. The improvements consist primarily of introduced landscaping for recreational use, with limited structural coverage of the land. Figure 1 depicts the open space system.

Care must be taken not to confuse undeveloped property (whether privately- or publicly-held) with open space. Designations of the Land Use Element of the General Plan and zoning for such property may permit development at some subsequent point in time.

The open space system presently includes approximately 15,155 acres of natural open space and 1,658 acres of active open space (e.g., parks and golf courses). Another 1,137 acres possess important open space resources and could potentially be added to the system in the future. At buildout of the General Plan, the open space system will comprise about 47% of the Planning Area's total acreage.

C. Relationship of the Open Space Element to other General Plan Elements

A General Plan must be internally consistent, meaning that none of its parts (principally the various elements) should conflict with any other part. Each Element must have equal status with other elements, and the policies and measures designed to implement one or more elements must mutually support those of the other elements in achieving the overall goals and policies of the General Plan.

For example, while the Land Use Element describes the City's desired character and size and its allocation of land to specific purposes or uses. The Open Space Element describes natural resources that should be protected within and around the City. The Recreation Element's main purpose is to plan for indoor and outdoor recreational facilities (such as parks, playfields, and community centers). The Open Space Element's main goal is to protect resources such as wildlife habitat, scenic, and agricultural land, with a secondary goal of providing recreation where it will not harm the environment or interfere with agricultural operations. Significant open space and ecological resources should be appropriately designated in the Land Use Element, to facilitate compliance with the policies identified in the Open Space Element.

The following text is included within the Open Space Element of the General Plan, as required by Ordinance 1265-NS, adopted by the City Council on June 18, 1996. The term "Land Use Map" refers to the Land Use Element map of the General Plan. "Parks, Golf Courses, Open Space" is a land use category in that Element.

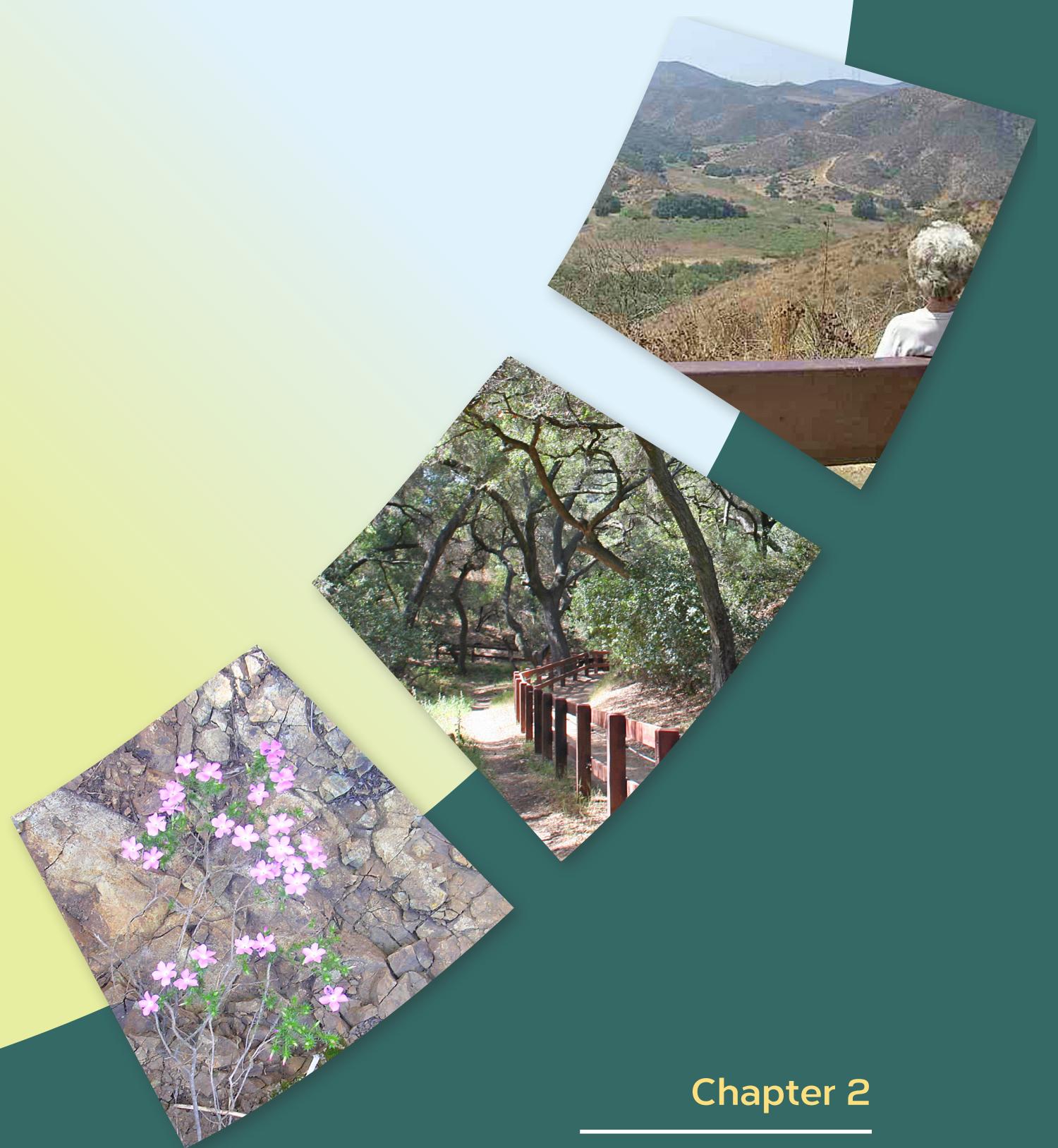
The "Parks, Golf Courses, Open Space" category (not to be reconsidered until after the Year 2030) identifies those lands that are designated for Parks, Golf Courses, Open Space on the Land Use Map.

The target date of 2030 associated with the Parks, Golf Courses, Open Space designation indicates a review date after which "Parks, Golf Courses, Open Space" designated lands may be reconsidered for urban uses. However, during the life of this plan as amended by initiative, it is intended that only parks, golf courses, open space uses are permitted on these lands. Furthermore, any updates to this plan are not intended to imply that development would necessarily be appropriate at that time.

This ordinance requires a vote of the people prior to changing any land designated as "Parks, Golf Courses, Open Space" (as of June 18, 1996), to any other land use category through December 31, 2030, subject to very limited exceptions.

Chapter 2

Benefits of Open Space



CHAPTER 2: BENEFITS OF OPEN SPACE

Open space areas serve a variety of critical functions in maintaining the balance of nature and the well-being of man, not the least of which are serving as habitat for wildlife, preventing soil erosion, maintaining air quality, controlling water runoff, serving as the subject for art and educational study, and providing opportunities for hiking, fishing, biking, horseback riding, and bird watching. Open space also plays an invaluable role in community development by delineating the urban edge where development ends and natural land begins, thus preventing the sprawl of urbanization.

A. Wildlife

Preserving wildlife resources requires preserving land in open space because any form of wildlife must have a habitat. Loss or alteration of habitat is a major cause of various forms of extinction.

Another critical function of open space is to provide wildlife movement corridors. Movement corridors are habitat linkages utilized by wildlife species to gain access to preferred foraging, water sources, nesting, and breeding areas. In order to maintain their populations in a healthy condition, animals must have access to these critical areas. In the Conejo Valley, these corridors also function as important access routes around developed areas to undeveloped parcels.

B. Vegetation

Plant and vegetative resources should be carefully conserved because of their importance for wildlife habitat, watershed protection, climate moderation, erosion control, and their scenic beauty. Open space affords permanent protection to biologically diverse native plant communities including rare and endangered species. Vegetation prevents erosion and flooding which, in turn, enhances both the quality and quantity of groundwater and surface water resources. It also improves and maintains air quality within the surrounding community by producing oxygen and filtering air pollution. More direct benefits of preservation of plant resources include the development of valuable medicines (some of which have been derived from rare plants) and improved agricultural productivity (resulting from successful cross-breeding of wild and domestic plants).

C. Archaeology

Knowledge of the past is a part of everyone's basic heritage. Open space in Thousand Oaks preserves archaeological and historic resources including significant prehistoric inland Chumash archaeological sites and historic structures. Safeguarding such resources links the community with its history, addresses community concerns over development growth and ensures the City is examining the interplay between nature and culture.

D. Education

Open space is a valuable educational tool. Certain states, such as California, require environmental education as a component of elementary school curriculum. Scientific research, including biological studies of habitats and species diversity, provides invaluable knowledge.

E. Trails

While modern society offers many types of recreation which can occur outdoors, open space provides natural dirt trails for residents who seek quiet solitude in the beauty of nature as well as varied levels of difficulty for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding.

F. Scenic Resources

The City of Thousand Oaks is rich in its scenic beauty. Open space is essential to preserve the spaciousness and attractiveness of the Conejo Valley. The scenic qualities of the Conejo Valley give our City its unique natural attributes. These are acknowledged and incorporated throughout the General Plan elements and in ordinances to protect and enhance the area's scenic resources which contribute significantly to our quality of life.

G. Wetlands and Riparian Lands

Wetlands and the riparian lands which border them are one of the most biologically productive habitats. They provide important breeding grounds for waterfowl and are an essential water source for wildlife. In addition to valuable habitat, these lands protect water quality by reducing runoff, allow groundwater recharge, and help control flooding. Loss of over 90% of Southern California's wetlands has dramatically reduced the natural ability of water bodies to filter impurities and has been a major factor in the decline of water quality.

H. Orderly Growth and Maintenance of the Economy

By directing where urban development should occur, Thousand Oaks is also defining areas that should remain as open space. Preservation of historic, scenic, social, cultural, and hazardous areas in permanent open space provides for the well-being of the community. Areas which are to remain in open space include major ridgelines, steeply sloping hillside terrain, oak groves, sensitive ecological systems, major barrancas and watercourses. Additionally, one of the goals of the General Plan calls for the completion of a ring of open space surrounding the City. The benefits of excluding development from these identified areas of open space are the creation of a more livable city and the preservation of the beauty of the Conejo Valley.

In recent years, cities experiencing the strongest economic growth are those judged to be most livable, a definition that includes environmental quality and open space.

I. Public Health and Safety

An important function of open space is land which is set aside as a buffer to separate people and buildings from intermittent or persistent hazards which could cause injury, damage, or death. Such lands also have potential for other uses. Lands along fault lines, for instance, can be retained in their natural condition as wildlife corridors; lands within pipeline rights of way or other utility easements can be used as trail easements; flood control facilities may be suitable for use as natural open space or recreation. For an in-depth discussion of these areas, please refer to the Safety Element of the General Plan.

J. Paleontology

Many significant paleontological resources are preserved in fossil-bearing rocks within the open space system. These fossil remains of plants and animals provide an important record of previous life forms from past geologic ages and aid in our understanding of how the Conejo Valley has changed over time.

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Chapter 3

Open Space Issues

CHAPTER 3: OPEN SPACE ISSUES

This chapter addresses the State-required topics of an Open Space Element, as well as important local open space issues.

A. Open Space for Preservation of Natural Resources

One of the guiding principles of the General Plan, specifically amplified in the Open Space and Conservation Elements, is to accommodate urban development within the Planning Area in such a way that valuable and important natural resources are preserved.

The location and extent of specific natural resources of importance to the community are identified in the Conservation Element, along with applicable policies and implementation measures pertaining to each. These resources include streams and creeks, wetlands and riparian habitat, wildlife corridors and key habitat areas, significant biological resources, such as oak woodland, rare and endangered species, cultural and historic resources, and certain topographic features such as steeply sloping land and ridgelines, and scenic resources. Where the Conservation Element identifies resources of particular importance and sensitivity requiring the preservation of an area in an essentially undisturbed state to successfully conserve the resources, then incorporation into the open space system is recommended.



Photo 2: Coast Live Oak Woodland

B. Open Space for the Managed Production of Resources

The Thousand Oaks Planning Area was historically used for sheep grazing, cattle grazing and agricultural purposes. Today, this area contains very limited land where natural resources of economic or other significance are suitable for extraction or harvesting purposes. Examples of such resources within a state-wide context include timber, agricultural lands important for the production of food and fiber, groundwater recharge areas, commercial fisheries, mineral deposits, oil and gas reserves, and sand and gravel deposits. There are presently no locations within the Planning Area where such resources are produced in an economically viable way.

Because of soil conditions and other factors, the Planning Area is not particularly suited to large-scale agricultural operations which could be characterized as the production of food and fiber. While there is no need to set aside open space within the Planning Area for the production of any of these resources, it is appropriate to establish policies related to the potential use of open space for such purposes in the future. These policies deal with the issue of whether and under what circumstances land within the open space system should be considered for the managed production of natural resources.

C. Open Space for Outdoor Recreation and Education

Outdoor recreation within natural open space areas provides opportunities for enjoyment of the scenic beauty present in many components of the open space system, as well as opportunities for healthful exercise and learning about nature. Hiking and riding, limited camping, and picnicking are examples of outdoor recreation opportunities available in the open space system. One of the key purposes of the open space system is to enable the development of a trail system within and extending beyond the Planning Area, which will permit enjoyment of the system by hikers, equestrians and bicyclists.

In addition, the Conservation Element establishes policies and implementation programs for the protection of cultural and historic resources. Where appropriate, inclusion within the open space system is a means to assure on-going preservation of such resources and to reflect their value in providing outdoor recreation and educational opportunities. Important examples of open space for this type of outdoor recreation include the Stagecoach Inn historic site, Satwiwa Native American Indian Culture Center, and the Oakbrook Chumash Interpretative Center in Oakbrook Regional Park.

These types of outdoor recreation activities are for the most part associated with large tracts of natural open space, and the focus of this section of the Open Space Element is on appropriate recreational use of natural open space lands.

Policies related to other types of recreational open space, such as parks, playfields, and golf courses are not contained in the Open Space Element. In these areas, recreation is the primary purpose, rather than the use and enjoyment of essentially undeveloped open space land. The community's goals, policies, and standards for the recreational use of these facilities are contained in the Recreation Element of the General Plan and the Conejo Recreation and Park District's Master Plan.



Photo 3: Conejo Canyons Open Space

D. Open Space for Public Health and Safety

Open space includes land which should be set aside in order to protect life and property from natural hazards. A description of the types of hazards which are present within the Planning Area, and the types of activities necessary to protect life and property from them is presented in the Safety Element.

Where protection from a hazard requires that land be maintained in basically an open undisturbed state, then the affected land is included within the Open Space Element. Incorporation of such lands in the open space system typically also serves other open space purposes, such as habitat protection or preservation of scenic resources.

Examples of components within open space which protect public health and safety include stream channels and barrancas, flood plains, slide-prone areas, and fuel management zones.

E. Open Space and Urban Form

The natural setting of the Conejo Valley provides an opportunity to use open space to shape the urban form of the City, to define relationships with neighboring cities, and to support regional planning. The City has embraced this opportunity, through the general development policies of the General Plan, and through inter-governmental efforts. Under the General Plan, the basic form of the community is one of development clustered in lower-lying areas within the Valley, while the hills and mountains surrounding the community are set aside in a ring of natural open space. Furthermore, the City supports greenbelts and other buffers beyond the Planning Area boundary,

separating Thousand Oaks from the nearby cities of Camarillo, Moorpark, and Simi Valley, and from the unincorporated areas of Lake Sherwood and Hidden Valley.

The City's Planning Area is bounded in many instances by mountains or hills which naturally divide it from other areas. These topographic features are generally less tolerant of development and have therefore been allocated to open space or to very low intensity development. An important exception to this condition is the easterly Planning Area boundary, which follows a jurisdictional line (Ventura/Los Angeles County line) rather than a natural topographic boundary.

This natural setting lends itself to coordinated planning not only because of the opportunity to define urban form through natural boundaries, but also because the setting defines a logical area for infrastructure planning (e.g., water supply, wastewater, drainage, roads) and reinforces a sense of community.

Through the dynamic open space programs of the City and other public agencies, the City is able to take advantage of this opportunity to shape urban form. In addition, the "ring" of open space at the periphery of the Planning Area supports goals and policies of the Conservation Element relating to habitat protection and wildlife movement corridors.



Photo 4: Rancho Potrero Open Space (foreground) and Vista Del Mar (flowering area behind)

F. Open Space Preservation and Stewardship

Chapter 4 provides an inventory of natural open space within the Planning Area. As that chapter shows, many public and private entities are responsible for stewardship of open space. Private entities consist primarily of homeowners or property owners

associations, managing common lots which are restricted to open space by development regulations and deed restrictions. Public agencies include the following:

- City of Thousand Oaks
- Conejo Recreation and Park District
- Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency
- County of Ventura
- Mountains Recreations and Conservation Authority
- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
- National Park Service
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- California Department of Parks and Recreation
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- United States Army Corps of Engineers
- Water districts

Historically, the City's policy towards open space ownership and management provided that most of the open space system would remain in private hands. The bulk of the system identified in the original Open Space Element adopted in 1972 was deemed to be subject to development constraints which would preserve the land in essentially its natural state.

In addition, at that time the City already had in place several regulatory tools designed to protect sensitive natural features, enabling the preservation of open space in private ownership. These include the Hillside Planned Development (HPD) zone with its slope/density and slope/open space restrictions and special development standards, the cluster development provisions of the Residential Planned Development (RPD) ordinance, as well as General Plan and Municipal Code policies discouraging grading in slopes over 25% natural grade and providing for oak tree protection.

In 1977, the City and the Conejo Recreation and Park District entered a joint powers agreement to form the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA) for the purpose of conserving open space lands, coordinating local land use and resource management decisions, and providing a community focal point for achieving open space and conservation goals. Since both component agencies had significant interest and responsibilities for open space management, it was logical to combine resources for the overall benefit of the community. The formation of COSCA preceded the establishment of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. It occupies a unique place in the larger regional system of open space management, and is a model for other agencies.

Over time, the open space ownership policy has evolved to one generally favoring public ownership. The reasons for this shift include the following:

- As more interest in open space as a recreational resource developed, it became clear that public ownership and control was desirable to provide recreational opportunities that are properly regulated to preserve sensitive resources.

- An agency was in place to provide coordinated planning and management of open space areas, including regular patrols to ensure that only allowable uses were occurring in the open space.
- The core of publicly-owned open space in 1972 (Wildwood Park and Oakbrook Regional Park) began to expand rapidly with the acquisition of the Los Robles Open Space by the City in 1973 and the Hope Open Space by CRPD in 1974. In the mid-1980's, COSCA received gifts of open space land from the Prudential Insurance Company totaling several thousand acres, which solidly established a major public ownership presence, and provided a critical base for future planning and expansion. Subsequently, large tracts of open space required to be set aside in major land developments were transferred to public ownership.
- Transfer to public ownership has advantages to the private property owner by shifting management responsibilities.

When the Open Space Element was adopted in 1972, the City's "open space zoning ordinance" comprised a variety of zoning regulations, principal among which were (1) the Hillside Planned Development (HPD) zone, which required certain lands to be set aside as open space, and (2) the Public Lands (P-L) zone, which provided a "home" zoning district for lands which were dedicated to a public agency as open space. These zoning tools were consistent with the policies of that time, which favored retention of open space in private hands.

In 1991, the City adopted a more refined and specific open space zoning ordinance (Section 9- 4.3600 et. seq. of the Municipal Code), entitled "Open Space Zone (OS)." This zoning district is tailored specifically to natural open space lands, and its regulations are restrictive as to the permitted improvements and uses which may be implemented for such lands.

Since then, the City has processed several City-wide zone change cases (Z 91-660, Z 91-661, and Z 2009-70020 are examples) to re-zone publicly-owned and privately-owned natural open space parcels into the OS zone. At this writing, approximately 11,100 acres of land within the City are zoned OS.

Irrespective of the ownership of land classified as natural open space, such properties should be considered for OS (Open Space) zoning.

G. Open Space Management

Open space must be managed wisely to protect and conserve its natural features, while providing recreational and educational opportunities to the community. Proper management includes the establishment of policies and procedures which guarantee that the land that is set aside as natural open space is so maintained for the long term.

The nature and type of public access which can be accommodated in open space will vary depending upon the sensitivity of the resources and the possibility of external impacts. Protecting the quality of the open space itself should be the paramount factor in management decisions pertaining to natural open space areas. Land which is set

aside as natural open space, whether in public or private ownership, should be managed in accordance with the policies contained in Chapter 5. Where appropriate, the agency having jurisdiction over the open space should prepare and adopt a management plan consistent with these policies.

COSCA adopted Management Policies and Guidelines in May, 1989 for open space resources under its care, which are incorporated in the Open Space Element by reference. These policies and guidelines are refined and updated as necessary, the most recent being COSCA Ordinance No. 01-2009 in May, 2009.

In addition, COSCA adopted the Conejo Canyons Management Plan in July, 2010. This management plan addresses a number of open space resources in northwest Thousand Oaks which total approximately 3,600 acres, including Hill Canyon, Wildwood Park and the Western Plateau.

In May, 2013, the COSCA Board of Directors adopted a Strategic Plan for the ongoing management of open space resources throughout its jurisdiction, which includes land within the boundaries of either the City of Thousand Oaks or Conejo Recreation and Park District.

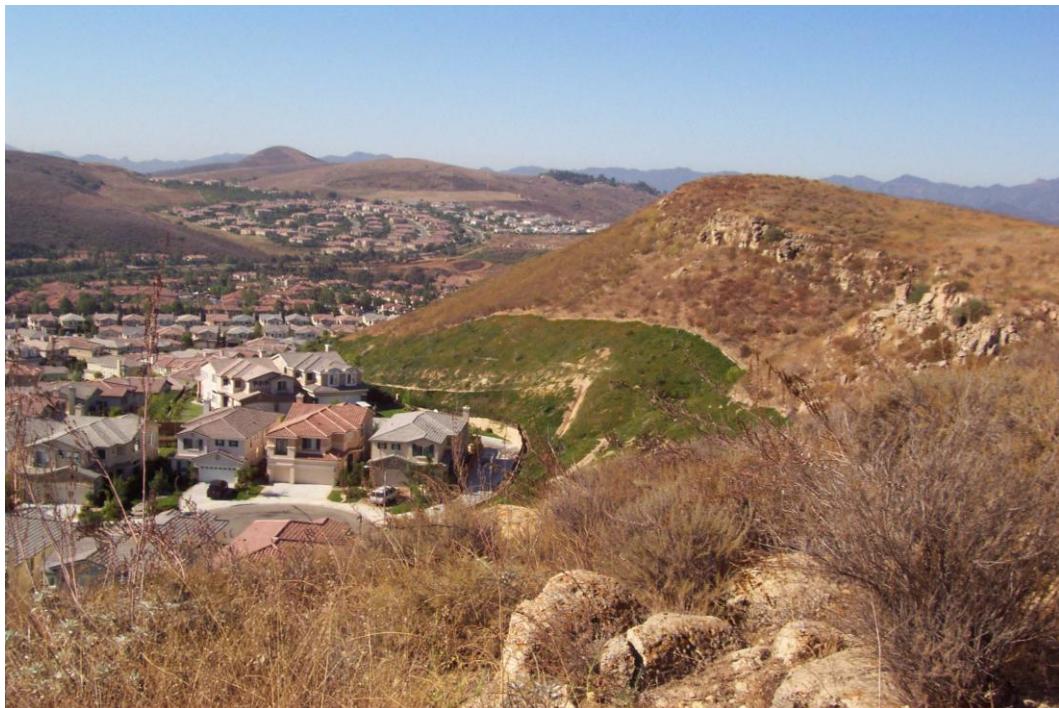


Photo 5: Lang Ranch Open Space

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Chapter 4

The Open
Space System

CHAPTER 4: THE OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

This chapter defines the Open Space System of the General Plan and inventories land which is, or is expected to be, set aside as open space as the community develops.

A. Delineation of the Open Space System

The open space system delineated by the General Plan includes natural open space lands, existing parks, future parks for both active and passive recreation, golf courses, and a system of equestrian, hiking, and bicycle trails linking sections of the Planning Area with each other, and with regional trails systems, such as the National Scenic Trail System.

Open space land is critically important to preserve and enhance the Conejo Valley's unique beauty and spaciousness. The great majority of natural open space land has been, and will continue to be, set aside within development projects in compliance with local land use policies and regulations, or donated by property owners. In this regard, the City has adopted several amendments to the Municipal Code to assure appropriate control over intensity of use and to establish suitable standards for hillside development. A financial plan to acquire and manage open space is included in Chapter 7 of this Element.

The Open Space System was designed at the onset of the General Plan process to address the common goals of the citizenry to have adequate open space and recreational facilities to meet the long-term needs of the community. The adopted goals and policies of the General Plan include three goals directly related to the Open Space System. These are:

1. To enhance and preserve the spaciousness and attractiveness of the Conejo Valley;
2. To provide and maintain a permanent park and recreational system of sufficient size and quality to serve current and future needs consonant with community expectations; and
3. To provide a high quality environment, healthful and pleasing to the senses, which values the relationship between maintenance of ecological systems and the people's general welfare.

The policies of the General Plan and the designations of the Land Use Element define the Open Space System to include natural open space as well as existing and future parks and golf courses. This Open Space System is intended to be a continuous and contiguous "ring" concept, providing a greenbelt around the perimeter of the City, surrounding areas of development rather than just areas of open space within developments, and extending into the community, preserving lower slopes and meadow areas as buffers from adjacent developments, adjoining parks and school sites. In addition to contiguous large open spaces, linkages between open space encompass a system of trails and corridors that allow for the movement of wildlife and people within the ring of open space. This open space network encourages land use patterns which

stimulate necessary development while protecting environmental quality and curbing urban sprawl.

In considering the "ring" concept, planning should extend beyond the City's planning boundary to provide a buffer zone with adjacent communities and encourage compatible land use with other jurisdictions.

The Open Space Element is designed to augment the Open Space System incorporated in the Land Use Element of the General Plan by analyzing the functions of open space, further delineating desirable open space areas and, together with the Conservation Element, setting forth a comprehensive and realistic implementation program to preserve sensitive biological habitats and the spacious quality of the Conejo Valley. The Recreation Element of this General Plan, prepared in cooperation with the Conejo Recreation and Park District, outlines specific goals, policies and proposals for active recreation facilities within the Conejo Valley. The Recreation Element augments the Open Space Element in guiding the effectuation of the Open Space System.

The Open Space System is depicted in Figure 1.



Photo 6: Mountain Bikers, Lang Ranch Open Space

B. Open Space Inventory

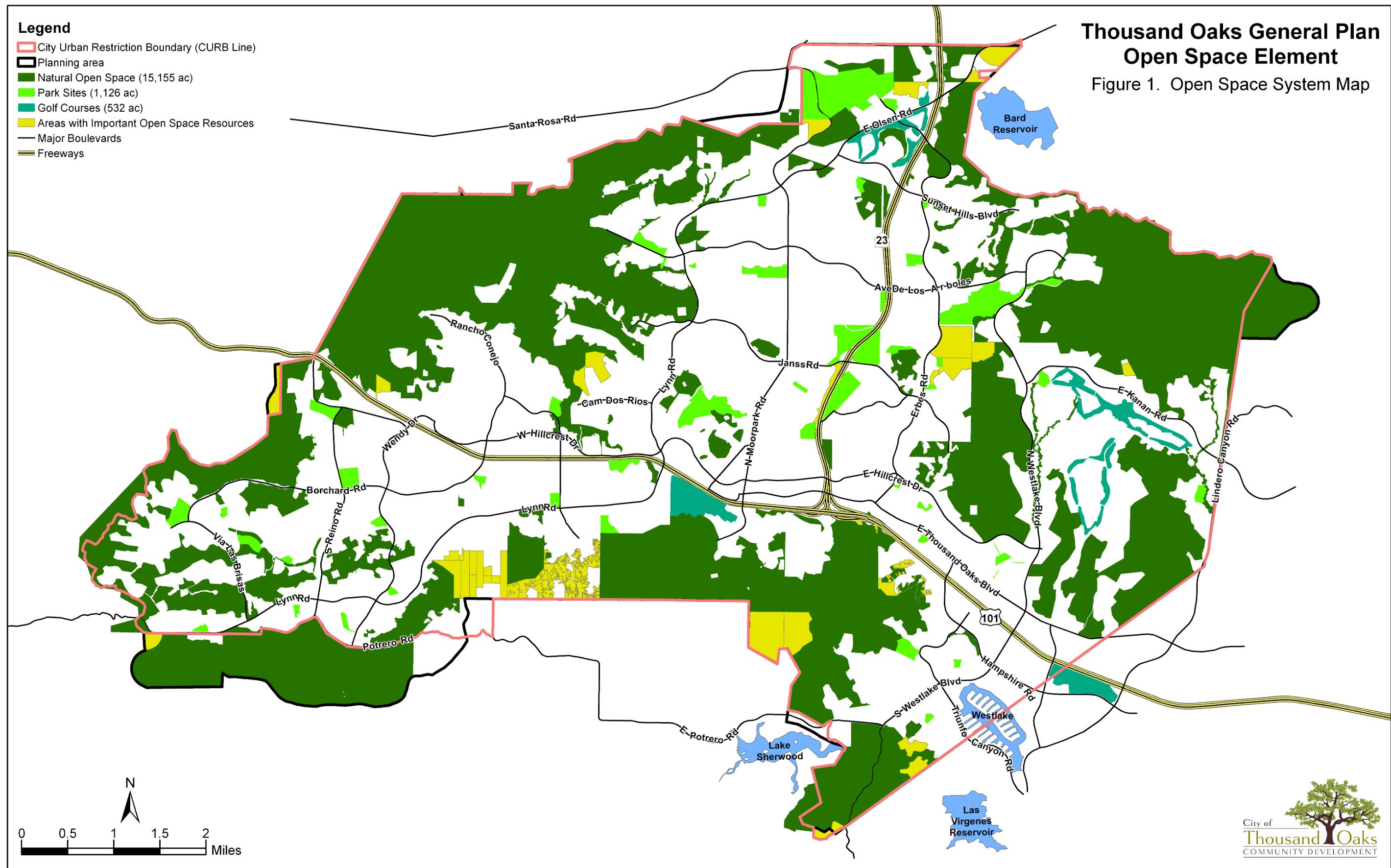
Thousand Oaks' permanent open space has grown steadily since the General Plan was adopted in 1970. Land classified as natural open space within the Planning Area in 2013 totals about 15,155 acres, or about 40% of the land within the Planning Area.

Other active elements of the open space system, including parks (1,126 acres) and golf courses (532 acres), account for another 1,658 acres, bringing the total for the open space system as a whole to about 16,813 acres, or 44% of the Planning Area.

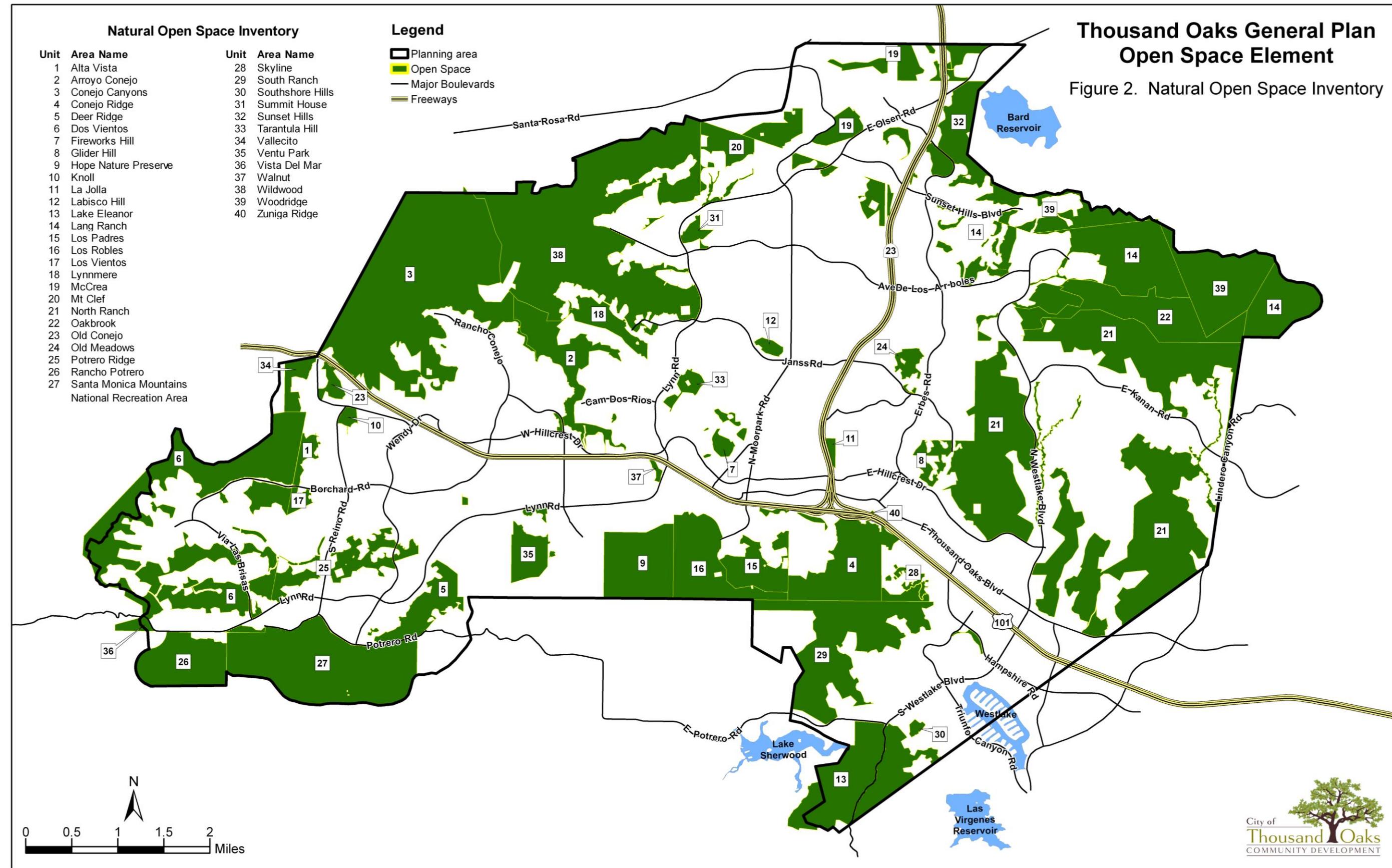
This sub-chapter inventories the existing natural open space, including lands which have been or are required to be set aside for this purpose, both in public ownership and in private ownership. For purposes of identification and description, open space parcels within close proximity to each other have been grouped into open space "areas." The descriptions below summarize open space resources, natural features, size, ownership, location, trails and access points. Table 1, on the next page, summarizes and tabulates open space acreage for these areas, and Figure 2, the Open Space Inventory, shows their location within the Planning Area. The relationship between local and regional natural open space is shown in Figure 3, "Regional Natural Open Space".

Table 1: Thousand Oaks Planning Area Open Space Inventory (2013)

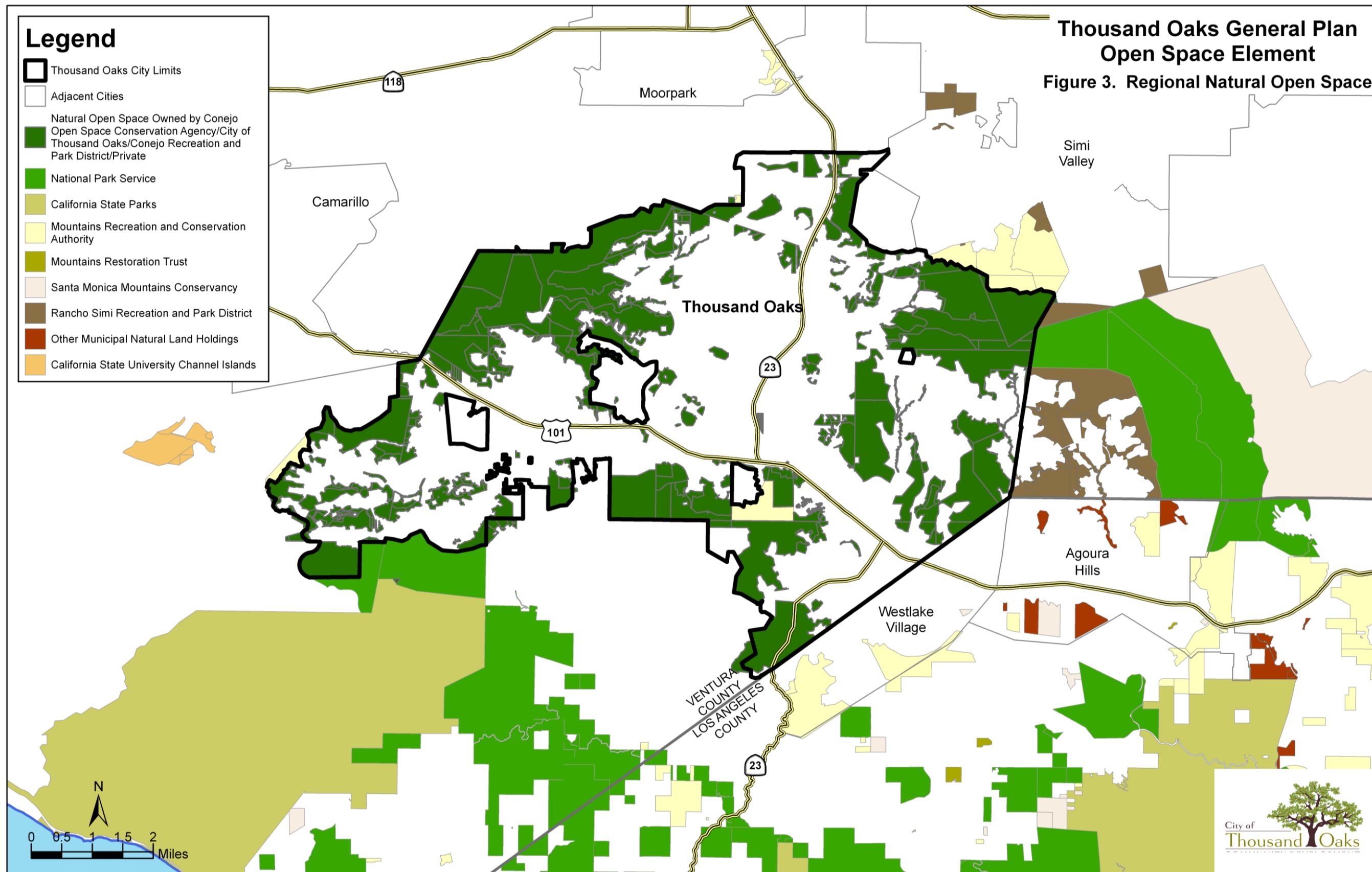
No.	Open Space Area	Acres by Ownership					
		COSCA	City	CRPD	Other Public	Private	TOTAL
1	Alta Vista	11				32	43
2	Arroyo Conejo	320	6			2	328
3	Conejo Canyons	303	945			380	1,628
4	Conejo Ridge	146	34		224		404
5	Deer Ridge	117	3			68	188
6	Dos Vientos	158	743		150	179	1,230
7	Fireworks Hill		33				33
8	Glider Hill					57	57
9	Hope Nature Preserve	348					348
10	Knoll	21					21
11	La Jolla		15				15
12	Labisco Hill		24				24
13	Lake Eleanor	516					516
14	Lang Ranch	79	525		250	9	863
15	Los Padres	160	8			19	187
16	Los Robles	357					357
17	Los Vientos	28					28
18	Lynnmere	107					107
19	McCrea	74	55	33		12	174
20	Mt. Clef Ridge	84	23	11	11	83	212
21	North Ranch	2,304	100			191	2,595
22	Oakbrook Regional Park			422		3	425
23	Old Conejo	38					38
24	Old Meadows		28	20			48
25	Potrero Ridge	188	1		8	13	210
26	Rancho Potrero	306					306
27	Santa Monica Mtns. NRA				964		964
28	Skyline	43	16				662
29	South Ranch	621	24	17			13
30	Southshore Hills	13					34
31	Summit House	32	2				410
32	Sunset Hills	326	2		50	32	47
33	Tarantula Hill	47					67
34	Vallecito		67				67
35	Ventu Park	141					141
36	Vista Del Mar		9				59
37	Walnut	9					9
38	Wildwood	621		1,111			9
39	Woodridge	441	181				1,732
40	Zuniga Ridge		1				622
	Total	7,959	2,845	1,614	1,657	1,080	15,221
	Percent	52%	18%	12%	11%	7%	100%



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1 Alta Vista

The Alta Vista Open Space is located adjacent to the Dos Vientos Open Space in Newbury Park. Most of this 43-acre area is owned by a homeowners association, although about 11 acres, located on the south side of Calle Alta Vista, is owned by COSCA. The predominant habitat on-site is coastal sage scrub.

2 Arroyo Conejo

The 328-acre Arroyo Conejo Open Space is located northeast of the intersection of Hillcrest Drive and Ventu Park Road. This area includes the Arroyo Conejo Nature Preserve, which is often referred to as the “barranca”, and was highlighted in the City’s original Conservation Element of the General Plan (1972) and the Conejo Canyons Study (1976) as an area with particularly important and sensitive resources. Resources include steep-sided canyons, oak woodlands, a perennial stream, and riparian vegetation which provide ideal habitat for nesting, foraging and wildlife movements. Most of this preserve is owned by COSCA, with limited access to protect the area’s resources. Trail access to this area is provided from the Rancho Conejo Playfield, which is on the east side of Ventu Park Road just north of Hillcrest Drive.

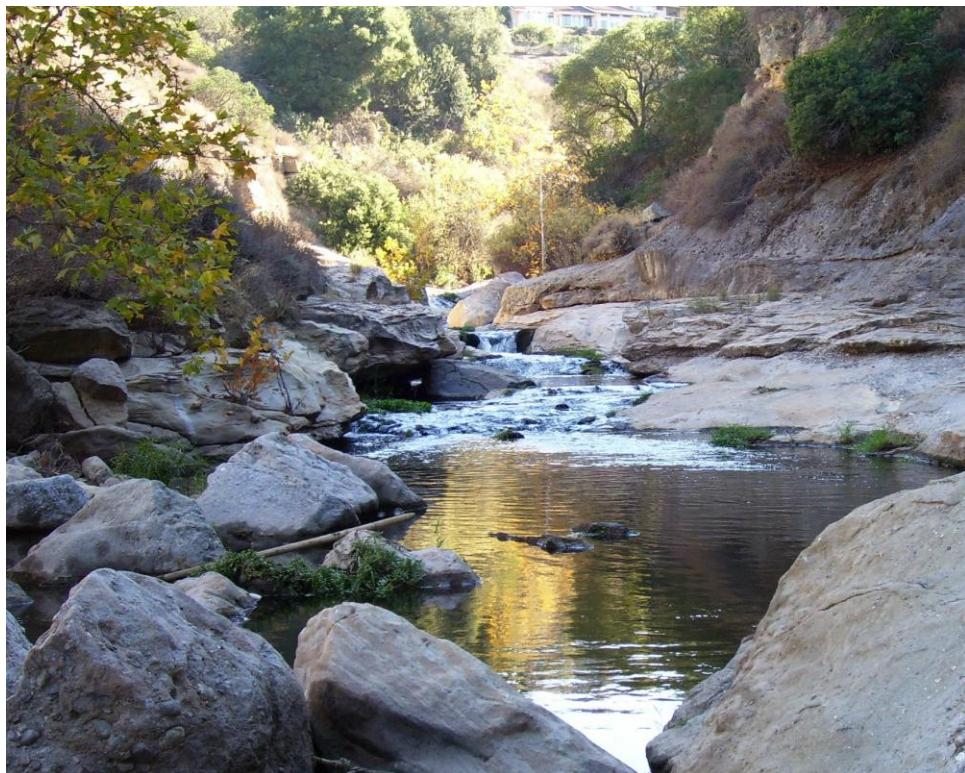


Photo 7: Arroyo Conejo Creek

3 Conejo Canyons

The Conejo Canyons Open Space is a system of deeply eroded canyons, plateaus and ridgelines in the northwest portion of the Conejo Valley. This area, which totals 1,628 acres, includes the Western Plateau, northern Arroyo Conejo, Western Canyon, Seventh Day Adventist property, and the Calleguas Ridgeline. On clear days, trails in this area afford dramatic views of Ventura and the coastline, as well as inland to the Topa Topa Mountains north of Ojai. This area also conserves a variety of habitats, including coast live oak woodlands, riparian habitats, interior sage scrub/chaparral, and coastal sage scrub. Most of this area is owned by the City, although almost 400 acres are in private ownership subject to a Specific Plan condition requiring an offer of dedication to the City.

A 154-acre golf course was originally envisioned along the north branch of the Arroyo Conejo in the canyon bottom as part of Specific Plan No.7; however in 2000 the City Council designated this area as natural open space.

The Western Plateau area (184 acres) section of this Open Space area was originally planned for development of 147 homes by Specific Plan No.7, but was acquired as natural public open space by the City in 2002.

In 2010 the COSCA Board approved a management plan for this and nearby areas. In 2011 a bridge was constructed over the Arroyo Conejo Creek near Santa Rosa County Park, in cooperation with the County of Ventura. The bridge is accessed from the intersection of Hill Canyon Road and Santa Rosa Road.



Photo 8: Conejo Canyons Open Space

4 Conejo Ridge

This 404-acre area includes the open space immediately south of the interchange of the Ventura (101) and Thousand Oaks (23) Freeways, as well as a secluded valley south of Rimrock Road. This area includes relatively undisturbed chaparral, oak woodlands and coastal sage scrub, and provides important habitat for deer, mountain lions, bobcats and other wildlife. The trail in this area links the southerly terminus of Rimrock Road with the Los Robles Trail. This area is adjacent to other open space units.

5 Deer Ridge

Located in the southwest portion of the City, the Deer Ridge Open Space is owned by COSCA and is dominated by a series of north-facing ridges and canyons that support chaparral with scattered oaks. This 188-acre area shares a common border with the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, and is a prominent visual feature in the Newbury Park area. The Los Robles Trail traverses the length of the Deer Ridge Open Space, with access points at the southern end of Felton Street, and at a trailhead on Potrero Road.

6 Dos Vientos

This large open space area (1,230 acres) is located in the southwest corner of the Conejo Valley at Dos Vientos Ranch. Dominated by chaparral and coastal sage scrub habitats, this area provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife as well as rare and endangered plants. An extensive trail system provides internal and regional trail connections, as well as views of the Pacific Ocean and the Channel Islands. Principal trail access points for this area are park sites within Dos Vientos Ranch. To the south of the Dos Vientos Open Space is Rancho Potrero, Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa and Point Mugu State Park. Contiguous open space areas to the east include the Alta Vista Open Space, Potrero Open Space, and Los Vientos Open Space.

7 Fireworks Hill

In 1997, the City Council approved a Specific Plan for the former Civic Center site at 401 West Hillcrest Drive, and the adjacent "Fireworks Hill," comprising a total of 62 acres of land. The Specific Plan designates 33 acres as open space.

8 Glider Hill

This area consists of 57 acres of private open space that encircles two prominent knolls. Public trails connect equestrians and other residents in the Hauser Circle/Rancho Road area to the North Ranch Open Space through this open space. The dominant vegetation is non-native grassland.

9 Hope Nature Preserve

This 348-acre parcel was a gift from the actor and comedian Bob Hope to CRPD. Located on the south side of the valley, this open space contains extensive stands of chaparral and oak woodland that provide ideal habitat for deer, coyotes, mountain lions, bobcats, gray fox, rabbits, and many other animals. In the springtime many wildflowers can be seen along the trails in this area. The Los Robles Trail provides the principal access through this open space, including connections to Lynn Oaks Park.

10 Knoll

The 21-acre Knoll Open Space is located next to Pepper Tree Playfield in Newbury Park. This area, which is owned by COSCA, is covered in a mosaic of non-native grasslands and coastal sage scrub. A gently sloping trail leads to the top of the hill, which offers views of Newbury Park and the surrounding area.

11 La Jolla

This City-owned property was originally subdivided for housing. In 1998, however, the City Council voted to designate the property as open space. Since then, volunteers have planted hundreds of oak trees on-site, restoring the property to a coast live oak woodland. The property is visible on the east side of the Thousand Oaks (23) Freeway, just north of the Ventura (101) Freeway.

12 Labisco Hill

The Labisco Hill Open Space is located in the heart of Thousand Oaks, near the northwest corner of Janss Road and Moorpark Road. Although relatively small (24 acres), this grassland-covered knoll provides a visual contrast to the urban landscape and creates a sense of spaciousness in the area.

13 Lake Eleanor

The Lake Eleanor Open Space is named for an 8-acre freshwater lake located near the center of this 516-acre area. Acquired by COSCA in 1986, this area includes diverse wildlife habitat and scenic resources, rugged hills, prominent rocky outcrops, freshwater marsh habitat, oak woodland and coastal sage scrub. The rocky outcrops are often used by hawks and other large birds as nesting sites, and the area supports several species of rare and endangered plants. Due to the rugged terrain and sensitive resources, trails have not been developed in this area.



Photo 9: Lake Eleanor

14 Lang Ranch

The Lang Ranch Open Space is located in the northeast portion of the city and is composed of several open space units totaling 863 acres. This is a picturesque area that includes rolling grasslands, oak woodlands, and riparian corridors. Trail access is provided from the eastern terminus of Westlake Boulevard, and the eastern terminus of Lang Ranch Parkway. The Lang Ranch trail system provides connections to other public lands, including China Flats, Cheesboro Canyon, Palo Comado Canyon, Sunset Hills Open Space, and the North Ranch Open Space. Most of this open space area is owned by the City.

15 Los Padres

This open space unit is located near the southern end of Moorpark Road, and encompasses 187 acres of chaparral-covered hillsides and oak woodlands. This area includes one of the most beautiful stands of coast live oaks in the City, and can be easily accessed from the Los Padres Trail on the west side of Los Padres Drive. This trail also provides a direct link to the Los Robles Trail near the ridgeline. This area is frequented by deer, rabbits, California quail, California thrashers and many other animals. In the spring and fall, the oak woodlands are an excellent place to observe migrating birds such as warblers and vireos. Most of this open space area is owned by COSCA.

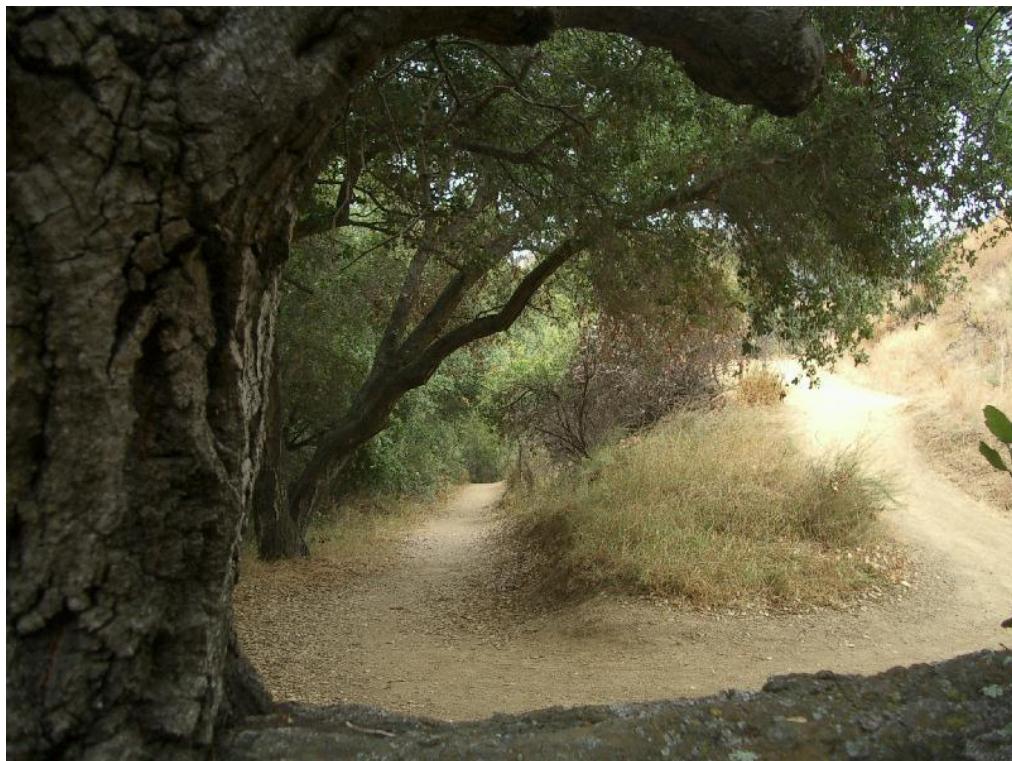


Photo 10: Lang Ranch Open Space

16 Los Robles

The Los Robles Open Space contains 357 acres located on the southerly edge of the Conejo Valley. It includes a nearly mile-long stretch of the prominent ridge line flanking the Valley, along with dense chaparral-covered slopes and some relatively flat, grassy potreros near the ridgeline where one can often see deer browsing in the early morning and late afternoon. There are several miles of trails within this open space area, and the ridgeline trails provide some of the most scenic vistas in the Valley, with panoramic views of Thousand Oaks. The principal trailhead is at the southern terminus of Moorpark Road, but secondary access is provided from trailheads at the Whole Access Trail on the west side of Greenmeadow Avenue and on Los Padres Drive. The City owns this open space area, along with the adjacent Los Robles Golf Course.

17 Los Vientos

This open space area is located at the southern terminus of Los Vientos Drive in Newbury Park. Covering 28 acres, this area includes non-native grassland and coastal sage scrub habitat. The area is contiguous to the Dos Vientos Open Space and is owned by COSCA.



Photo 11: Trailhead at South Moorpark Road

18 Lynnmere

The Lynnmere Open Space protects 107 acres of coastal sage scrub-covered slopes and ridge lines. This area, connects to Wildwood Park, is frequented by deer and other wildlife that move freely between these open space areas. Trails in this area provide views of Wildwood Park, Mount Clef Ridge, and the Conejo Canyons Open Space. This area is owned by COSCA.



Photo 12: Lynnmere Open Space

19 McCrea Open Space

This area encompasses 172 acres around the McCrea Ranch. In 1981, a 74-acre preserve was donated as a gift to COSCA from the actor Joel McCrea and his family. This area includes rocky outcrops that are favorite roosting and nesting sites for birds of prey, as well as a deep canyon that provides a year-round water source for local wildlife and riparian vegetation. The area also supports several species of rare and endangered plants and the locally unique Conejo rock plant association. Under terms of an agreement with the McCrea family, public access to this preserve is restricted to protect sensitive resources. Later, the Conejo Recreation and Park District acquired a 37-acre lot comprising hillside grassland area in the vicinity. In 2011, the Conejo Recreation and Park District built an interpretive center that describes the ranching history of the property and the McCrea family. In 2000, the City approved Tract 5142, a residential subdivision just east of the McCrea Ranch. That included a 55-acre open space lot consisting of steep hillsides and ridgeline terrain, which was transferred to COSCA, and 12 acres of privately-owned (HOA) internal open space within the Tract.

20 Mount Clef Ridge

The Mt. Clef Ridge Open Space totals 212 acres, and extends from the Norwegian Grade (Moorpark Road) west to Wildwood Park. This area protects ridgelines that afford sweeping views of both the Conejo Valley and the Santa Rosa Valley. Plant communities include coastal sage scrub and chaparral. Two sensitive plants- Lyon's Pentachaeta and Conejo Dudleya- are found in this area, and the area also supports many wildlife species such as deer, coyote, and gray fox. The trail in this area connects to trails in Wildwood Park. Open space is owned by COSCA and CRPD, and a conservation easement on private property protects additional habitat.

21 North Ranch

The North Ranch Open Space includes an extensive system of protected areas that conserve diverse habitats, plants, and animals. This area, which totals 2,595 acres, is primarily owned by COSCA, with a few smaller areas in private ownership. Among the most outstanding resources in this area are the sandstone cliffs of the Simi Hills, spacious mosaics of coastal sage scrub and grassland, pockets of Southern California black walnut groves, and coast live oak woodlands along the area's creeks. Wildlife is abundant, and includes most mammals and birds likely to be seen in the Conejo Valley. A number of sensitive plants also occur in these areas. Access to the North Ranch Open Space is provided at the North Ranch Playfield, and through numerous neighborhood trail access points. North Ranch Open Space trails connect with the Lang Ranch Open Space.

22 Oakbrook Regional Park

This 425-acre park is owned by the Conejo Recreation and Park District, and features a Chumash Interpretive Center. The Park is adjacent to the Lang Ranch

Open Space in the northeast corner of the City, and was established to protect cultural resources, chaparral habitat and an outstanding coast live oak woodland along Lang Creek. Most of the park consists of steep, north-facing slopes with very dense chaparral and occasional sandstone outcrops.

23 Old Conejo

This small hill is located immediately north of the Pepper Tree Playfield in Newbury Park. Encompassing 38 acres, it contains a short hiking trail and provides panoramic views of Boney Mountain and other parts of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area to the south.

24 Old Meadows

This 48-acre open space area is owned by the City and CRPD, and located adjacent to Old Meadows Park just east of Conejo Creek Park. This area supports non-native grassland, coastal sage scrub, valley oak woodland, and scattered coast live oaks, and includes a knoll with views of the Conejo Valley. Access is provided from either Church Road/El Monte Drive, or from Shadow Oaks Place and Marview Road.

25 Potrero Ridge

The Potrero Ridge Open Space encompasses a low-lying ridge that runs east-west in Newbury Park. This area, which totals 210 acres, includes grassy hillsides, coastal sage scrub, and oak woodlands, and is accessed from a trailhead on Wendy Drive. A trailhead on Reino Road provides additional access to this area and to the Dos Vientos Open Space to the west. Most of this area is owned by COSCA.

26 Rancho Potrero

In 1993, the City, CRPD and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority cooperated to acquire a 326-acre area located south of Potrero Road in the southwest corner of the Conejo Valley. This area, which is bordered on the east by the National Park Service's Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa Native American Indian Culture Center, includes grasslands, coastal sage scrub with the Conejo rock plant association, and riparian habitats. A Specific Plan was approved for the property in 2010 by the City, which identified most of the property as natural open space, with 20 acres next to Lynn Road set aside for public equestrian center use. Trails at Rancho Potrero connect to the Dos Vientos Open Space and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. On clear days, the coastline and Channel Islands can be seen from the "Olympia Farms" site, which is located mid-elevation on the property and still has graded pad areas from the previous use.



Photo 13: Rancho Potrero Open Space (foreground) and Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (background)

27 Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) was established in 1978. About 964 acres of the SMMNRA is within the Thousand Oaks Planning Area, located at the southern edge of Newbury Park. Within this area is the National Park Service-owned Rancho Sierra Vista and the Satwiwa Native American Indian Culture Center. Trails from Rancho Sierra Vista connect to the Pacific Ocean, through Point Mugu State Park. In 1993, the National Park Service acquired a 315-acre portion of the Broome Ranch, of which 109 acres is within the City's Planning Area and included in the total acreage above. Access to these areas is from the southern terminus of Wendy Road at Potrero Road and on the south side of Lynn Road opposite Via Andrea.

28 Skyline

This area is located south of Skyline Drive, and includes a series of small north-facing ridges and valleys. This 59-acre preserve is covered in dense chaparral, with occasional stands of coast live oaks. Most of this open space area is owned by COSCA, some of which was acquired by gift, some by direct purchase from property owners, and some that was purchased at a tax foreclosure sale. It is likely that more parcels will be added in the future. The best access to this area is from Foothill Drive.

29 South Ranch

The Westlake South Ranch Open Space was donated to COSCA in 1986 by the Prudential Insurance Company, and includes 662 acres. This area protects a significant portion of the ridgeline south of the Ventura (101) Freeway, extending

toward Lake Eleanor. A variety of habitats occur in this area, including chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and coast live oak woodlands, as well as a significant portion of the Los Robles Trail. Principal access points include Triunfo Community Park, and East Potrero Road on the west side of Vista Oaks Way. Deer, bobcat, and rabbits are commonly seen in this area.



Photo 15: South Ranch Open Space

30 Southshore Hills

This 13-acre area is located between Southshore Hills Park and the Lake Eleanor Open Space. This area serves principally as wildlife habitat and to protect visual resources. This preserve is owned by COSCA and supports coastal sage scrub and chaparral.

31 Summit House

The 34-acre Summit House Open Space is located near the northeast corner of Avenida de los Arboles and Lynn Road, and includes non-native grassland and coastal sage scrub. The Summit House Open Space is owned by COSCA.

32 Sunset Hills

This area includes 410 acres of open space distributed throughout the Sunset Hills community in northern Thousand Oaks. The largest of these areas is a key component of the "ring" of open space, located on Erbes Road, east of the Thousand Oaks (23) Freeway and south of Olsen Road. This 238-acre area protects oak woodlands, coastal sage scrub, non-native grasslands and coastal

sage scrub. It also contains areas of steeply sloping land and a prominent ridgeline. Trails in this area provide views of Bard Reservoir, and on clear days the Pacific Ocean can be seen. This area supports many species of wildlife, including birds of prey such as black-shouldered kites, northern harriers and red-tailed hawks. Spring blooms of bladderpod attract many hummingbirds to this area. Access is provided from a trailhead on Erbes Road. COSCA owns the majority of the Sunset Hills Open Space.

33 Tarantula Hill

This area, named for the spiders which frequent its grassy slopes, is located in the heart of Thousand Oaks near the Conejo Valley Botanic Gardens. Rising sharply from the valley floor, this 47-acre area provides panoramic views of Thousand Oaks. Parking is available on Gainsborough Road, with a paved service road providing access to the top of the hill. Tarantula Hill is owned by COSCA.

34 Vallecito

This 67-acre area consists of steep slopes and a ridgeline above and to the south and west of Vallecito Mobile Home Park, west of Old Conejo Road. It is an important link in the ring of open space in this area, and abuts the Dos Vientos Open Space to the south. The land is owned by the City.

35 Ventu Park

This 141-acre open space area is located adjacent to the community of Ventu Park. Covered in dense chaparral with occasional coast live oaks, this area provides important wildlife habitat and protects scenic, north-facing slopes and a portion of the southern ridgeline. A trail provides access to the Los Robles Trail from Lynn Road. This area is owned by COSCA.

36 Vista Del Mar

This 9-acre property was originally approved for homes pursuant to the Dos Vientos Ranch Specific Plan (8/9), and is located on the southwest side of Lynn Road opposite Via Acosta. In 2008, the City purchased the land as public open space in order to delineate the urban/open space edge and to preserve views of the coastline.



Photo 14: Vista Del Mar (area behind Lynn Road). Looking southwest.

37 Walnut

This small, 9-acre area is located next to Walnut Park, near the intersection of Lynn Road and the Ventura (101) Freeway. It is a critical scenic resource at an important gateway to the community. The area includes coastal sage scrub and a few coast live oaks. A trail from Walnut Park provides access to this area. COSCA owns the Walnut Open Space.

38 Wildwood Park

Wildwood Park comprises the largest contiguous open space unit in Thousand Oaks. Covering 1,732 acres, Wildwood Park protects many important wildlife habitats as well as provides many opportunities for passive recreation. Trails provide access to most parts of Wildwood Park, and several picnic areas are located near Wildwood Creek. Almost all of the plant communities found in Thousand Oaks can be located in Wildwood Park, and the park supports several species of rare and endangered plants. Wildlife includes deer, bobcat, raccoon, coyote, opossum, gray fox, and mountain lion. Access is provided at the western terminus of Avenida de los Arboles, and at several neighborhood access points. Most of Wildwood Park is owned by the Conejo Recreation and Park District, with lesser amounts owned by COSCA.



Photo 16: Wildwood Park

39 Woodridge

This 622-acre area protects a diverse mosaic of natural habitats in northeastern Thousand Oaks, including coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and coast live oak woodlands. This open space connects to the Sunset Hills Open Space to the west, and to the Lang Ranch Open Space to the south. Access to this area is by trails from the Lang Ranch Open Space, which begin at the east end of Lang Ranch Parkway. The Woodridge Open Space trails also connect to the Wood Ranch area of Simi Valley.

40 Zuniga Ridge

This 1-acre open space area was donated to the City by the Zuniga family. It serves to protect a highly visible area on the north side of the Ventura (101) Freeway, just west of the Civic Arts Plaza.



Photo 17: Woodridge Open Space

C. Areas with Important Open Space Resources

The preceding sub-chapter inventoried natural open space which is owned by public agencies or is privately-owned but subject to City-imposed restrictions.

This sub-chapter identifies areas with important open space resources, which should be considered as priorities for future additions to the open space system in line with the policies of this Element. The areas identified and described in this sub-chapter comprise the most significant future open space resources only. From time to time, other areas with important open space resources may be identified and the City may determine to preserve such areas.

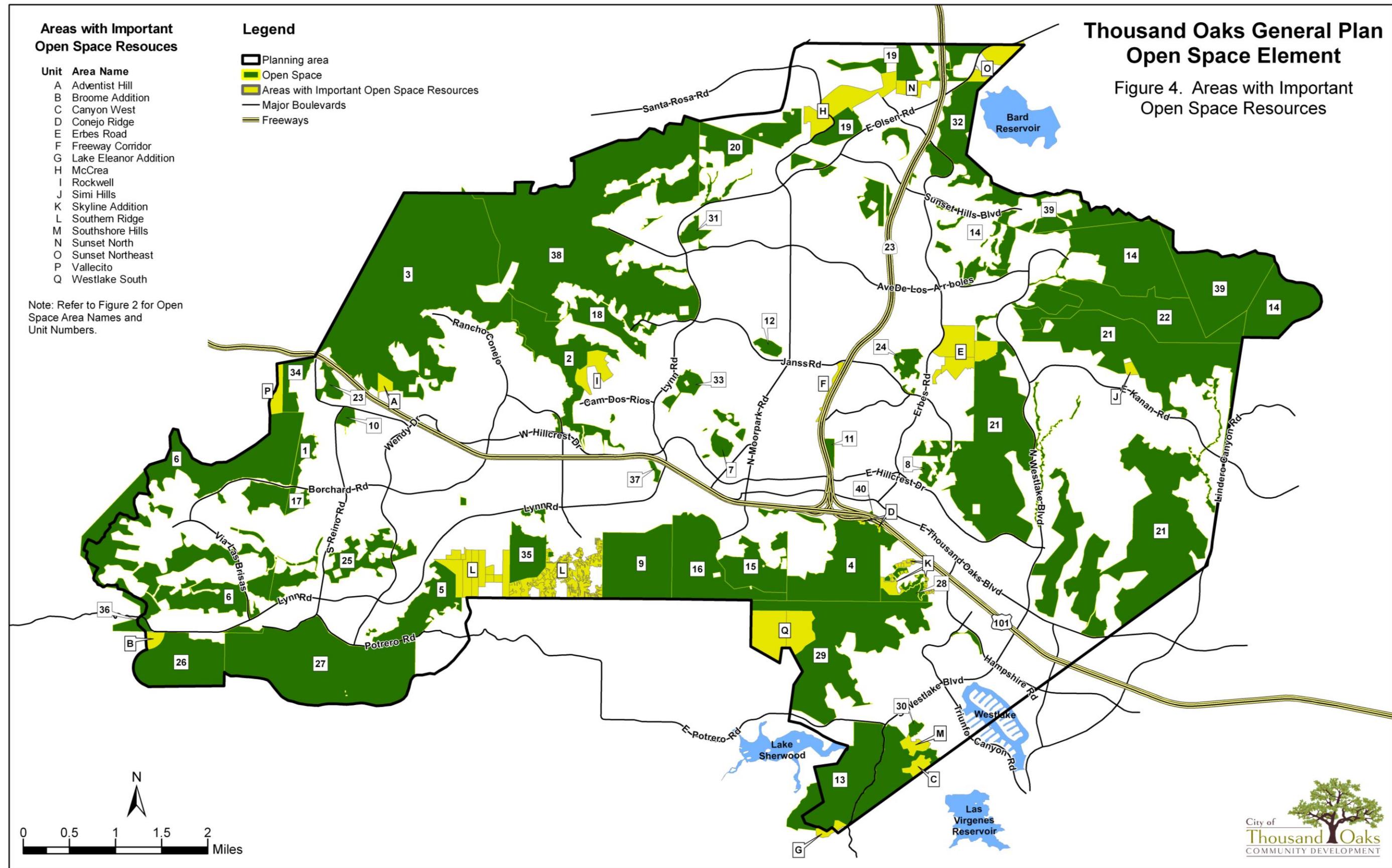
This discussion is not intended to limit the City's efforts in open space acquisition to only those areas described below.

As Figures 1 and 2 show, most of the ring of open space within the City's Planning Area has been set aside as open space. Supporting elements of the ring, such as Greenbelt Agreement areas, open space within adjacent jurisdictions, and undeveloped land with significant development constraints, are also in place as shown on Figure 1.

Completion of the ring of open space should be the first priority for future open space preservation efforts. Specific areas of focus are shown on Figure 4, and are briefly described in this section. Table 2, below, identifies these areas and their acreage.

Table 2: Areas with Important Open Space Resources

Area	Size in Acres (Approx.)
A Adventist Hill	16
B Broome Addition	22
C Canyon West	24
D Conejo Ridge	4
E Erbes Road	152
F Freeway Corridor	8
G Lake Eleanor Addition	18
H McCrea	137
I Rockwell	45
J Simi Hills	11
K Skyline Addition	19
L Southern Ridge	350
M Southshore Hills	23
N Sunset North	30
O Sunset Northeast	53
P Vallecito	33
Q Westlake South	192
TOTAL	1,137



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The discussion of each area notes the degree to which land with resource or open space value within the area is likely to be set aside through the normal development review process, based upon the General Plan designation and zoning of the property in 2013, and the application of adopted General Plan policies.

A Adventist Hill

This area consists of 16 acres of steep slopes and ridgelines located within the upper portions of undeveloped lots fronting on Grande Vista Drive. It includes significant open space areas that would be protected due to topography. Adequate land use controls exist to conserve this open space.

B Broome Addition

This includes a 22-acre portion of a large parcel at the southwestern periphery of the Planning Area adjacent to Rancho Potrero, the balance of which is outside the City's Planning Area. The property would reinforce the wildlife movement corridor in this area with some terrain which is relatively easy to traverse and has exceptional scenic qualities. This site is designated for "very low density residential" development by the Land Use Element of the General Plan.

C Canyon West

This site is surrounded on three sides by the Lake Eleanor Open Space, and contains scrub oak woodland, chaparral, and sensitive species such as the endangered Lyon's Pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta lyoni*), which is an annual plant found only in the Conejo Valley. The property consists of 24 acres.

D Conejo Ridge

This area is located south of the 101/23 Freeway interchange and has largely been preserved. It consists of two small parcels on the south side of the Ventura (101) Freeway. Purchase or donation of these parcels is appropriate for protection of these parcels.

E Erbes Road

The majority of this 152-acre area is zoned RPD-0.2U (Residential Planned Development, 0.2 dwelling units per acre), with Hillside Planned Development (HPD) zoned for the remainder. Most of the open space in this area will be preserved through the development process.

F Freeway Corridor

This approximately 8-acre strip along the west side of the Thousand Oaks Freeway (Route 23) is part of the Freeway right-of-way and is owned by CalTrans. The Conejo Recreation and Park District leases this area for trail purposes. It contains southern oak woodland, riparian, and wetland habitat, and is also a scenic open space amenity for travelers, obscuring the view of a concrete-lined flood control channel.

G Lake Eleanor Addition

This is a remnant 18-acre site zoned RPD-0.1U-SFD on the south side of the Lake Eleanor Open Space. Existing zoning should be adequate for significant open space protection.

H McCrea

This 137-acre area consists of hillside areas within the McCrea Ranch, and a portion of the YMCA property on Olsen Road. The McCrea Ranch is adjacent to open space at the former Cornell Ranch at the easterly terminus of Read Road. Hillside areas at the YMCA will be protected through the development review process.

I Rockwell

This area is contiguous to the Arroyo Conejo Open Space and includes oak woodlands and coastal sage habitats. It encompasses approximately 45 acres. It is located in the unincorporated Lynn Ranch area. Most of open space resources in this area can be preserved through the development review process.

J Simi Hills

This 11-acre parcel in the North Ranch area is owned by the California Water Service Company and is the site of a water reservoir. Most of the property is open mountainous land. It is surrounded on three sides by COSCA open space. Protection of the majority of the parcel (excluding the water reservoir) could augment the North Ranch Open space.

K Skyline Addition

This 19-acre area is located adjacent to the South Ranch and Conejo Ridge Open Space areas, and comprises an antiquated subdivision with numerous small lots primarily zoned RE-13 (Rural Exclusive, 13,000 square foot minimum lot size). The City has acquired many parcels in this area over the years through donation, market rate purchases, and tax sales.

L Southern Ridge

This area is within unincorporated area and is zoned OS-20 (Open Space, 20 acre minimum lot size). Some of the resources in this area will be protected under the provisions of the Thousand Oaks Area Plan, but other approaches may be necessary to conserve open space resources.

M Southshore Hills

This is a remnant 23-acre site zoned RPD-0.1U-SFD-PR adjacent to the Lake Eleanor Open Space. Existing zoning should be adequate for significant open space protection.

N Sunset North

This area consists of a 30-acre ridgeline parcel that is zoned for residential development. Development controls under the Protected Ridgeline Overlay Zone will protect the majority of this parcel, but purchase may be appropriate.

O Sunset Northeast

This 53-acre site is located on hillside and ridgeline terrain adjacent to Olsen Road and the Calleguas Municipal Water District facility. Development under the existing RPD-0.22-SFD zoning can be expected to substantially preserve open space resources.

P Vallecito

This area is located on the upper slopes on the west side of the Vallecito Mobile Home Park. It consists of approximately 33 acres. Development controls should be adequate to protect this area.

Q Westlake South

This 192-acre area was re-zoned by the City Council to Hillside Planned Development with the Protected Ridgeline overlay, which will preserve most of the site as natural open space. Still, the area is surrounded on the north and south by open space areas, and may merit additional measures to protect open space.

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Chapter 5

Policies

CHAPTER 5: POLICIES

The purpose of this chapter is to identify policies and implementation measures for the conservation and use of open space resources. The responsibility for carrying out the programs falls with City staff in carrying out activities related to development project review, capital program planning interaction with County, State, and Federal agencies, and through participation in COSCA.



Photo 18: Wildwood Mesa

A. Open Space for Preservation of Natural Resources

Policy

OS-1 *Open space shall include those areas which contain resources and/or characteristics as described by the Conservation Element as necessary to preserve in an essentially undisturbed state, except for restoration and enhancement activities which may be desirable to improve the site's resource value, for purposes of natural resource protection.*

Implementation Measures

1. Review new projects to place particularly sensitive resources, as identified by the Conservation Element, in open space areas.
2. Continue to apply the City's Oak Tree Ordinance and Landmark Tree Preservation and Protection Ordinance.

B. Open Space for the Managed Production of Resources

Policies

OS-2 *Generally, land within the Planning Area is not suitable for the managed production of natural resources which are present on or under the surface, including timber, mineral, sand and gravel, and oil and gas resources.*

OS-3 *Groundwater recharge areas and extraction systems may be permitted within open space only if they are beneficial to regional water conservation and groundwater replenishment efforts and not detrimental to the function and resources of the open space system.*

Implementation Measure

1. Review groundwater extraction or recharge proposals to identify and evaluate all potential benefits and detriments to open space.

C. Open Space for Outdoor Recreation and Education

Policies

OS-4 *The degree of public access, and the nature, extent, and design of facilities necessary to provide access to, and enjoyment of, open space areas, such as trails, trailheads, information kiosks, signage, parking, camping areas, and other visitor facilities and improvements, shall be dictated by the nature and sensitivity of the specific open space area. Such improvements, where necessary and warranted, shall blend unobtrusively with the natural setting.*

OS-5 *Trails are a key component of the Open Space Element. A Trail Master Plan providing appropriate controlled access to open space within the Planning Area, and connecting to the regional trail system, is incorporated in the Conejo Recreation and Park District Master Plan. This Trail Master Plan is hereby incorporated as a component of the Open Space Element. In carrying out its responsibilities, the City shall support completion of this trail system in a manner compatible with the other policies of this Element.*

OS-6 *Outdoor recreation activities within open space shall be planned to avoid adverse impacts to natural and cultural resources and on nearby locations.*

Implementation Measures

1. Conduct field surveys of planned trail routes to avoid sensitive natural features and cultural resources.
2. Design, construct and maintain trails to minimize disturbance of native vegetation.
3. Use natural building materials, native plant materials, and earth-tone colors to the greatest extent possible in all fencing, trailheads, kiosks and other open space improvements.
4. Minimize the use of signs in open space areas, using signs only for visitor information, safety, and resource protection.
5. Locate visitor information signs, kiosks, and related improvements principally at trailheads to reduce signage within open space areas.
6. Install fencing and barrier materials where appropriate to direct public access to specific entry points, control off-road vehicle access, and provide for public safety and resource protection.

7. Limit the number of visitors and periods of access to areas with particularly sensitive resources.
8. Close, relocate, or construct and maintain barriers alongside trails in areas where visitor use has adversely affected natural or cultural resources.
9. Through development review, secure trail rights-of-way or easements, and on-site trail construction, where such trails are designated by the Trails Master Plan.
10. Participate in cooperative regional trail planning with public and private organizations to identify and develop regional trail connections.
11. Allow multiple use on all trails, except where infeasible due to topography.
12. Cooperate with the Conejo Recreation and Park District to regularly evaluate and update the Trail Master Plan.
13. Maintain an inventory of key trail/street crossings, and upgrade crossings, in coordination with the City's Public Works Department, to facilitate trail use as opportunities arise.
14. Continue to foster public involvement in trail system planning, maintenance and construction through close coordination with the Conejo Open Space Trails Advisory Committee (COSTAC) and trail-related programs.
15. Locate trails in such a manner to minimize visual impacts on adjacent communities, including use of existing access roads and paths.
16. Where possible, maintain a buffer area between trails and existing residential development, including use of existing plant materials to screen trails from nearby homes.
17. Develop and maintain a system of trailheads to provide adequate parking and related facilities for trail users, to avoid trail use parking on residential streets.
18. Install signage at principal trail entry points where necessary to direct visitors to use only established trails and to follow other open space rules and trail use guidelines.

D. Open Space for Public Health and Safety

Policies

- OS-7 *Open space shall contain those areas, such as flood plains, areas of unstable slopes, and fuel modification zones which are identified by the Safety Element of the General Plan as necessary to remain in an undeveloped state for the purposes of maintaining public safety.*
- OS-8 *Where fuel modification zones necessary to protect people and structures from wildfire hazard are acquired by a public agency as open space, the on-going maintenance shall be provided by the original property owner, successor in*

interest, or other designated party, with no obligation or liability accruing to a public agency.

- OS-9 *Open space managers should work cooperatively with other public agencies including, but not limited to, the Ventura County Fire Protection District to implement fuel modification zones and conduct vegetation management programs where appropriate, and to accommodate fire protection access, including helipads and fire roads, within natural open space areas in a manner which provides effective protection to the public and also preserves native habitat and protects the natural environment.*
- OS-10 *The City supports regional efforts to designate and preserve large areas of open space beneficial to the protection of regional air and water quality.*

Implementation Measures

1. Designate as open space those areas within new development projects necessary to remain undeveloped for public health and safety purposes, as identified in the Safety Element of the General Plan
2. When fuel modification zones are accepted as open space by a public agency, ensure that an appropriate privately-funded mechanism is in place to guarantee maintenance at no cost to the general public.
3. Continue to accommodate fire roads and helipads in open space areas where such improvements are necessary for public health and safety, while minimizing disturbance to the resources as much as possible.
4. Continue to support regional planning efforts which direct new development to cities, and preserve large open area buffers between cities.
5. Cognizant of immediate public health and safety needs during a wildfire, attempt to coordinate with other agencies in order to minimize the impact of bulldozer firebreaks on natural and cultural resources.

E. Open Space and Urban Form

Policies

- OS-11 *In its activities to implement the General Plan, the City shall strive to create and maintain a connected ring of natural open space surrounding the developed portions of the Planning Area, complemented by the preservation as open space of significant hillside and ridgeline areas within the Valley. Achievement of the policies relating to the ring concept is an important factor to be considered in decisions regarding appropriate land use and the acquisition of open space.*
- OS-12 *The ring of open space is a planning principle. Where it is depicted on maps, its location and extent are conceptual and it is not intended to pre-designate specific individual parcels or groups of properties as open space.*

- OS-13 *The City shall support implementation of cooperative regional planning efforts, such as greenbelt agreements, which reinforce and extend the ring of open space, as well as low intensity rural agricultural land use, beyond the Planning Area boundaries.*
- OS-14 *To further reinforce the ring of open space planning principle, the City shall support efforts by other government agencies or non-profit organizations to acquire and beneficially manage open space in the vicinity of the Planning Area, and to work to preserve regional wildlife habitat linkages.*
- OS-15 *Both within its Area of Interest, and in the larger regional setting, the City shall continue to support policies and programs (e.g., the Guidelines for Orderly Development) that encourage urban development to locate within cities and that preserve regional open space in order to preserve valuable elements of the natural environment, to protect agricultural land, and to guide urban form.*

Implementation Measures

1. Protect open space per the Action Plan to Implement the Open Space Element, and acquire open space per the Financial Plan to Acquire and Manage Open Space.
2. Ensure that General Plan and other publications appropriately describe and depict the ring of open space.
3. Continue support of the Tierra Rejada Greenbelt Agreement.
4. Continue support of the Thousand Oaks Area Plan.
5. Support other inter-agency agreements which foster achievement of regional open space policies.
6. Monitor open space acquisition and management activities and express City support where appropriate.
7. Continue to support regional planning efforts which direct new development to cities, and preserve large open area buffers between cities.

F. Open Space Preservation and Stewardship

Policies

- OS-16 *Land set aside as natural open space shall be retained as such in perpetuity for the long-term benefit of the community and the environment.*
- OS-17 *Generally, natural open space land should be transferred to public ownership, to provide consistent management, linkage with other components of the open space system, and appropriate recreational and educational opportunities.*
- OS-18 *Policies of public agencies which own and manage open space should require a public hearing by the governing body prior to any proposed sale, exchange,*

other disposition, lease, grant of easement, or construction of improvements which are inconsistent with passive recreation uses, with respect to such open space. Such actions should generally be allowed only in very limited circumstances where there is substantial community benefit, and the action complies with other policies of the General Plan.

- OS-19 *Certain natural open space units are appropriate for private ownership and management. These principally include smaller, isolated parcels, which will not readily be integrated into the larger open space system. Privately-owned open space should be subject to appropriate conditions or approval, deed restrictions, or easements, with the City or the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA) as a beneficiary, to assure its continued protection.*
- OS-20 *Continue the transfer of natural open space parcels owned by the City and the Conejo Recreation and Park District to the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA), as appropriate, to facilitate specialized and consistent planning and management of open space resources.*
- OS-21 *Generally, land which is set aside as natural open space land should be zoned OS (Open Space), in order to provide appropriate and consistent legislative controls on land use and improvements.*

Implementation Measures

1. Continue re-zoning of natural open space lands to the Open Space (OS) Zone.
2. Retain the majority of natural open space in public ownership.
3. Where privately-owned natural open space is appropriate, require deed restrictions or conservation easements, with the City or the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency as a beneficiary, to protect open space resources in perpetuity.
4. Continue to require significant natural open space set aside through the development process to be dedicated in fee title to a public agency for long term stewardship.
5. Continue to enable public ownership and management of natural open space through continued participation in the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency.
6. Request the adoption of a policy by the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency and Conejo Recreation and Park District to require a public hearing by its governing body prior to disposition or long-term use of natural open space which is incompatible with passive recreation uses.
7. Acquire conservation easements, or apply deed restrictions to private natural open space, with the City or the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency as a beneficiary, in order to protect open space resources in perpetuity.

8. Acquire trail easements over private natural open space areas, where necessary in order to retain public trail access to and between open space lands.
9. Periodically review privately-owned natural open space lands to ensure the long-term protection of open space resources.
10. Identify and transfer natural open space lands owned by the City and Conejo Recreation and Park District to the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency, as appropriate, after concurrence by the governing boards of each agency.

G. Open Space Management

Policies

- OS-22 *Unimproved or improved roads should only be permitted within or traversing natural open space areas where depicted by the Circulation Element of the General Plan, or where easements for such purposes are in place when the open space land is set aside.*
- OS-23 *In determining the nature and extent of visitor use permitted within natural open space, protection of natural resources within the open space shall be the overriding factor. All forms of hunting or trapping shall be prohibited, except hunting conducted under the auspices of a public agency for public safety purposes and live trapping which is necessary for purposes of scientific study conducted by, or under the auspices of, a public agency and which does not result in injury or death to the animal. Use of poisonous baits shall be prohibited.*
- OS-24 *Facilities necessary to serve visitors, such as trails, trailheads, access roads and parking lots, kiosks, restrooms, signage shall be designed and installed so as to have no impact on sensitive natural resources within the open space area, and minimal impact on non-sensitive resources. Where emergency facilities or public service and utility facilities must be located in a natural open space area, they and any necessary access roads shall be located and designed to minimize impacts.*
- OS-25 *Significant plant and animal habitats should be identified and prioritized for needed enhancements and restoration in a cost-effective manner.*
- OS-26 *Locations where open space resources are vulnerable to degradation due to off-road vehicular access, illegal dumping, or other damaging activities should be identified and measures to protect the open space developed.*
- OS-27 *Continue efforts to protect water quality of streams located within open space areas from adverse effects associated with recreational use; since the streams and creeks within open space drain the Conejo Valley in general, continue to implement and improve programs and measures to reduce pollution stormwater and nuisance water pollution.*
- OS-28 *Accommodate all trail users safely, provide a range of scenic experiences and degrees of difficulty, with the larger objective of protecting natural resources within open space areas, and minimizing man-made intrusions in open space. Exclude motor vehicles from trail use (except for management, research and*

maintenance purposes), and appropriately regulate trail use as necessary in order to maintain safety and to protect both the natural environment and trail improvements.

- OS-29 *Open space managers should work cooperatively with the utility companies, water agencies, and the Ventura County Watershed Protection District to assure that facilities subject to their jurisdiction are planned and designed in a manner which provides effective public service and also protects the natural environment.*
- OS-30 *Natural drainage courses should be protected within open space areas. Use of concrete or other flood control improvements in natural drainage courses is discouraged, and should occur only when no reasonable alternatives can be found that would maintain natural hydrological and ecological functions.*
- OS-31 *Plan new developments to avoid direct and secondary impacts on valuable open space resources; including appropriate access control, location and maintenance of fuel modification areas.*

Implementation Measures

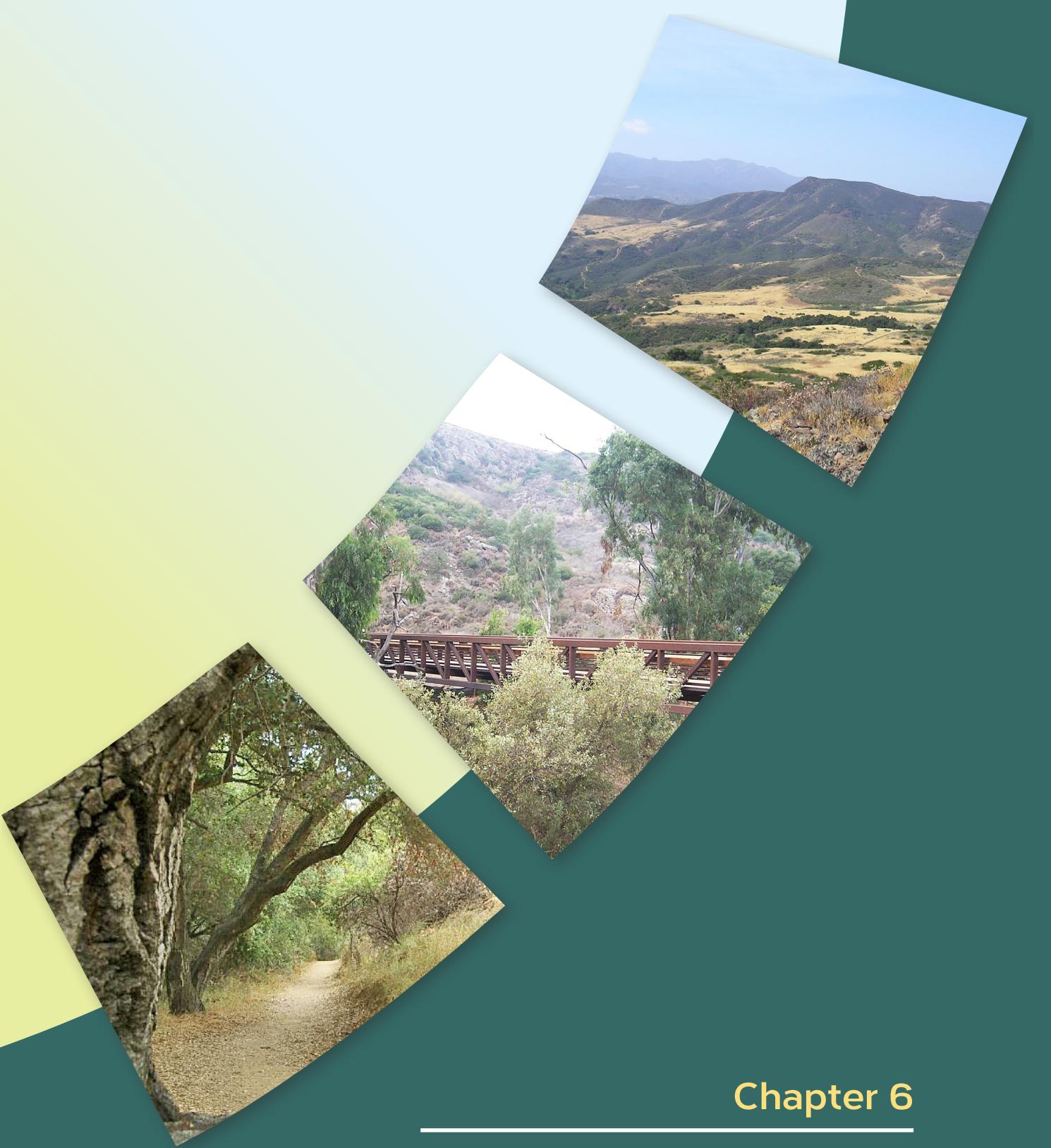
1. The Circulation Element of the General Plan presently depicts appropriate road locations within open space. Review proposed amendments to the Circulation Element to avoid negative impacts to open space resources.
2. Proposed road easements potentially affecting open space lands shall be carefully reviewed to avoid or minimize impact on open space resources. Where approved, easements should be described and identified on the recorded tract map or land division, and in related development permits, at the time of dedication.
3. Existing road easements across open space land shall be reviewed and may be relocated if desirable to avoid or minimize impact on open space resources.
4. Identify and avoid natural resources of particular importance or sensitivity, and cultural resources, during the development of plans to accommodate visitor use.
5. Emphasize the importance of natural resource protection in educational materials related to recreational use of open space.
6. Encourage research projects by recognized institutions that will contribute to a data base on local open space resource characteristics and recreational use patterns and require that COSCA be provided with copies of any reports or publications resulting from such research.
7. Implementation measures for policies relating to Open Space for Outdoor Recreation and Education, above, are applicable.
8. Inventory significant plant and animal habitats within open space areas for potential restoration or enhancement, including an assessment of the costs and benefits of such restoration on a site-specific basis.
9. Seek grants and other special funding sources for prioritized plant and animal habitat restoration or enhancement.

10. Inventory and prioritize natural open space areas damaged by off-road vehicles, dumping or other activities (i.e. firebreaks, unauthorized trails) and develop site-specific measures to reduce such activity.
11. Systematically implement a program to construct fencing or other barriers where indicated by the inventory.
12. Install appropriate signage and coordinate enforcement of ordinances related to illegal dumping and off-road vehicle use in open space with the Ventura County Sheriff's Department.
13. Continue to collaborate with other City departments and responsible agencies to develop a monitoring program of water quality in principal creeks and streams within open space areas.
14. Install signage and other improvements and regulate use as necessary to avoid adverse impacts to water quality from recreational activities in open space.
15. Continue programs to periodically clean streamside areas of trash and other foreign debris deposited during stormwater flows.
16. Review new development within the City Planning Area and in adjacent cities and unincorporated areas to impose conditions necessary to protect downstream water quality.
17. Plan trails collaboratively with the Conejo Recreation and Park District to maximize the visitor's experience and minimize impacts to natural resources.
18. Design and develop trails to be multiple-use wherever such use does not adversely affect trail user safety or trail improvements.
19. Continue efforts to communicate responsible trail use concepts to the community through a variety of media.
20. If necessary, develop additional regulations regarding trail use in consultation with other local agencies and the Conejo Open Space Trails Advisory Committee.
21. Continue to work with utility companies and agencies, and the Ventura County Watershed Protection District to accommodate utility lines and flood control facilities where such improvements are necessary for public health and safety, while minimizing disturbance to open space resources.
22. Manage open space and control adjacent development so as to preclude wherever possible the need for flood control and stormwater retention improvements within natural drainage courses and open space areas. Where such facilities are unavoidable for public safety reasons, use innovative design and construction techniques to minimize impact on open space resources.
23. Inventory and avoid sensitive natural and cultural resources wherever possible in all new development.

24. Where feasible, include transition areas in new development projects between natural open space and developed areas.
25. Restore ground disturbances, including roads and trails not part of the trail system, and avoid or remove debris or improvements foreign to the natural environment in areas to be dedicated as natural open space.
26. Control access to open space from streets and other access ways through fencing or other appropriate barriers where needed; preclude residential lot access to open space through non-gated fences or walls.
27. Install improvements at all trailhead entry locations to control motorized vehicle access to trails while allowing access for people who use assistive mobility devices wherever possible.
28. Create separate lots outside natural open space areas to include all fuel modification zones as required by the Fire Protection District, with maintenance responsibility exercised and controlled by private landowners, according to City policies.
29. Review and provide comments on environmental documents for development projects in adjoining cities and unincorporated areas that could impact open space within the Planning Area.



Photo 19: Conejo Canyons Open Space



Chapter 6

Action Plan
to Implement the
Open Space Element

CHAPTER 6: ACTION PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

This chapter is a statement of the City's plan to carry out the policies established in Chapter 5 and complete the open space system described in Chapter 4. Methods to finance acquisition of open space areas, where necessary, and for maintenance of the system are discussed in Chapter 7.

The City's Zoning Ordinance includes a number of sections related to open space conservation, which are described below. These components have all been adopted by the City Council and are contained in the Thousand Oaks Municipal Code (TOMC).

A. Open Space Zone

The City's Open Space Zone (TOMC Section 9-4.3600 et seq.) was established in compliance with California Government Code Sections 65560-70 (Open Space Lands), and Sections 65910-11 (Open Space Zoning). The regulations of this zone are intended to be applied to those lands which are set aside as natural open space, whether in public or private ownership, ensuring that any uses or structures proposed on such land will have "minimal impact on the natural, undisturbed character of the land." As noted earlier in this Element, approximately 11,100 acres of land within the City have been zoned OS (Open Space), and are subject to its regulations.

B. Restriction on Disposition or Lease of City Open Space

The general policy of the City is that open space shall be retained as such in perpetuity. From time to time, it may be beneficial to consider sale, exchange, other transfer, lease, grant of easement, or the construction of improvements which are consistent with passive recreational uses. This section of the Municipal Code (TOMC Section 9-13.101 et. seq.) establishes procedural safeguards vis-à-vis City-owned open space, which require the City Council to conduct a public hearing prior to considering a request of the type enumerated above.

C. Hillside Planned Development Zone

The Hillside Planned Development (HPD) Zone was adopted in 1971 (TOMC Section 9-4.300 et seq.). It is a residential zoning district, the regulations of which apply to all properties which have been placed in that zone through the re-zoning process. It is a "planned development" zone, allowing a limited degree of clustering of density in order to preserve larger areas of open space.

Under the provisions of this zone, the maximum density of development is regulated in inverse relationship to the average slope, and the percentage of the site which must remain as open space or be developed for recreational purposes is regulated in direct proportion to the average slope. Special design standards suited to hillside terrain are also incorporated in the ordinance.

The purpose of this zone is to encourage the retention of steep slopes, ridgelines, and other prominent natural features while permitting limited residential development. Following development, those portions of the site which have been set aside as natural

open space are often transferred to public ownership. Whether they are transferred or retained by the property owners association, Open Space (OS) zoning is appropriate once the parcels have been created and restricted to open space by a development entitlement.

While this ordinance is generally appropriate for regulating hillside development and insuring the provision of open space, the slope-density table should be reviewed to consider some downward revisions to the maximum permissible density for the various slope categories, and also to consider a “sliding scale” rather than “step intervals” for relating permissible density and required open space to the parcel’s average slope.

D. Protected Ridgeline Overlay Zone

Adopted in 1991, this overlay zone (TOMC Section 9-43500 et seq.) is designed to protect ridgelines within and surrounding the community, as identified by the City’s Ridgeline Study (1988 Update), which supplemented the original Ridgeline Study prepared in 1978. Where applied to a specific property through the re-zoning process, specific development standards are established to regulate development on the site in relation to the identified ridgeline.

It should be noted that both the General Plan (General Policies and the Conservation Element) and Resolution 78-66 define the City’s interest and policy to preserve the identified ridgelines wherever possible. These policies are implemented through the specific standards of the Protected Ridgeline overlay zone where applicable, or through techniques identified in the Ridgeline Study (1988 Update) on a Planning Area-wide basis.

E. Urban Restriction Boundary

At the Municipal Election held November 3, 1998, the electorate of the City of Thousand Oaks approved a City Council-sponsored ballot Measure that established a City Urban Restriction Boundary (CURB) in order to control urban expansion and extension of urban services, thereby protecting agricultural resources, open space and environmentally sensitive lands around the City’s periphery.

The Ordinance adopting the Measure provides that the text of the Measure be added to the Open Space Element of the General Plan. It is included herein as Chapter 8.

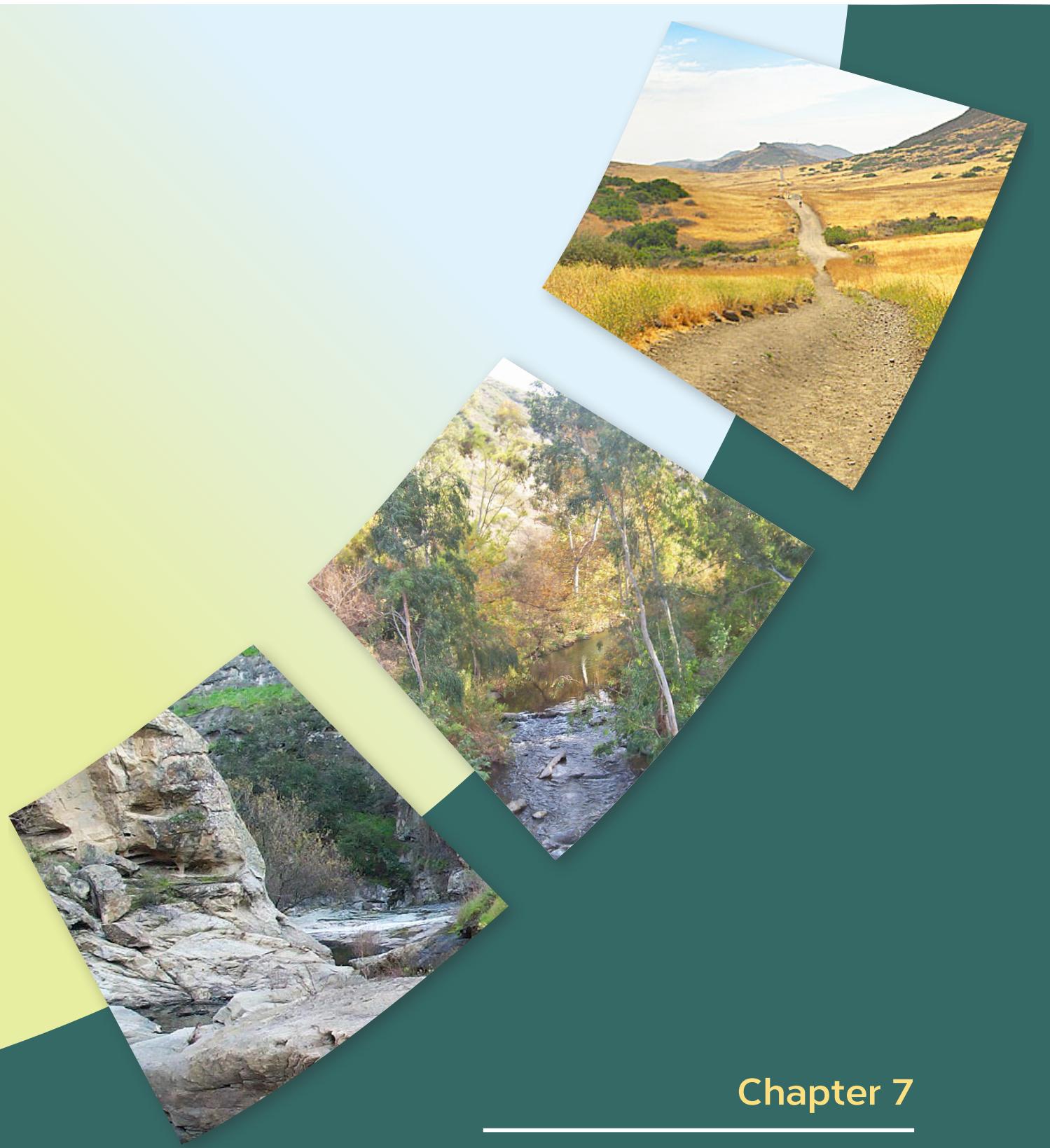
F. COSCA Ordinance No. 01-2009

Adopted by the COSCA Board of Directors in May 2009, the purpose of the ordinance is to provide rules to govern the use of COSCA open space so that all people can enjoy and use the open space. It ensures that the rights of all concerned are protected while assuring that the natural resources within COSCA open space and the undeveloped character of the open space are preserved.



Photo 20: Equestrians on the Los Robles Trail

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Chapter 7

Financial Plan to
Acquire & Manage
Open Space

CHAPTER 7: FINANCIAL PLAN TO ACQUIRE AND MANAGE OPEN SPACE

Chapter 4 delineated the open space system, including those areas with important open space resources for future protection. As indicated in the descriptions of those resources, many areas can be preserved through the development review process, in cases where those portions of a proposed development that contain protected resources can be set aside as open space, with the remainder of the parcel developed in a manner consistent with the General Plan and underlying zoning. In several instances, however, lands for future open space protection identified in Chapter 4 are not expected to be preserved as open space during the development review process.

This is principally because the land has already been subdivided and reasonable development permissible under law and zoning will not provide large continuous open space areas meeting the objectives of the General Plan. Examples include the Southern Ridge, Conejo Ridge and Skyline areas.

In these instances, it may be necessary for the City or COSCA to purchase an interest in the property to preserve its open space character. This chapter identifies financial strategies and resources which may be available in such cases, or which have already been used to conserve open space in Thousand Oaks.

Where the City or other public agency is considering the acquisition of an open space area by purchase, its relative significance for open space purposes should first be evaluated using the open space evaluation criteria adopted by COSCA.

A. Community Recreation Facilities and Open Space Endowment Fund

The Community Recreation Facilities and Open Space Endowment Fund (CROSEF) was established in 1999 and receives annual revenue from multiple sources, including the bedroom tax, golf non-resident fee, general fund unreserved balance transfer, donations and the Adopt-an-Oak Tree program. Some of these revenue sources are discussed in more detail below. The current Fund balance is about \$1,600,000.

This fund can be used for open space acquisition and maintenance or construction of open space amenities such as trails or bridges. To date the fund has been used to purchase land as permanent open space in the Conejo Ridge, Dos Vientos, Mt. Clef, Skyline, Summit House, and Vallecito Open Space areas.

B. Open Space, Conservation, and Scenic Easements; Acquisition of Development Rights

An easement is a right granted by a property owner to another, either with or without monetary consideration, which gives the other party certain rights. An open space, conservation, or scenic easement is a tool which should be used where outright acquisition of the open space is not desirable or possible, and where the property owner is willing to place certain restrictions on the property which limit its use in such a way that the desirable open space character is preserved. The cost of the easement may be less than outright acquisition, depending upon the development rights retained by the

owner under the easement agreement. COSCA has entered into one conservation easement in order to protect land vital to regional wildlife movement.

A similar tool is the acquisition of all development rights. This may be desirable where it is appropriate that the open space remain in private ownership (e.g., a small parcel internal to a tract), but it is in the public interest to fully restrict any potential future development.

C. “Bedroom Tax”

Municipal Code Section 3-16.01 et. seq. (Fees in Connection with the Construction of Dwelling Units), commonly known as the “Bedroom Tax” levies a charge on new residential construction, varying from \$100 to \$200 per dwelling unit, depending upon the number of bedrooms in the residence. Revenue derived there from is placed in a Special Capital Outlay Fund for “the acquisition, improvement, and development of open space, public parks, parkways, and median islands.” Future revenues accruing to this fund at the present levels are expected to total approximately \$400,000 over the next 20-25 years to buildout of the Planning Area. A portion of the Bedroom Tax revenue collected by the City each year goes into the Community Recreation Facilities and Open Space Endowment Fund.

D. General Fund Revenue

The City Council has a policy to transfer up to 10% of any annual General Fund net operating gain, not to exceed \$100,000, to the CROSEF. For a number of years, this transfer did not take place due to budgetary restrictions. However, the transfer was reinstated in the FY 2011-12 and successive budgets, resulting in transfers of \$7,576 and \$100,000 respectively in FY 2011-12 and FY 2012-13. The 2013-2014 Budget does include a projected transfer of \$100,000 pursuant to this policy.

E. Golf Course Fees

In years when the Los Robles Golf Course enterprise fund shows a profit, the Golf Course Fund transfers \$2 for every non-resident round of golf, up to \$100,000 to the CROSEF.

F. Tax Foreclosure Sales

Occasionally properties which have been identified as valuable open space acquisitions become available through tax foreclosure sales. The City has acquired parcels in the Skyline Open Space area through this method, and should continue to actively monitor sale announcements. This method may be particularly applicable to smaller parcels in older subdivisions.

G. Open Space Acquisition Bond Issue

Where a large amount of money is needed to acquire one or more parcels for open space purposes, and there is substantial community support (2/3 voter approval at an election is required in order to approve such a measure), this option may be viable.

H. Open Space Maintenance Districts

The City has used this technique with large developments where open space is dedicated pursuant to a specific plan or subdivision map. A special district is established which levies an annual assessment on the owners of other property within the Specific Plan or subdivision, to provide funds to maintain the dedicated open space. The major portion of such maintenance is typically brush clearance.

I. Grants

Although grant funding available from higher levels of government is scarce and subject to significant competition where it does exist, the City and other local agencies should continue to monitor and apply for such funding for open space acquisition. Grants have been successfully obtained for open space acquisition and improvements, such as from the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

J. Donations and Bargain Sales

Donations and bargain sales, in which the property owner sells the property for less than appraised value (essentially a partial donation), can provide tax advantages to the owner, as well as valuable open space which might not otherwise be acquired. Many open space areas have been acquired through donation, both from individuals and corporations such as the Prudential Insurance Company which granted several thousand acres in the North Ranch and South Ranch portions of the Westlake Village area to COSCA in the mid-1980's.

K. COSCA Trust Fund

This fund receives revenue principally from license agreements for wireless communications facilities on COSCA land and has been used for both open space acquisition and open space maintenance.

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Chapter 8

Thousand Oaks City Urban Restriction Boundary

CHAPTER 8: THOUSAND OAKS CITY URBAN RESTRICTION BOUNDARY

Introduction

The electorate of the City of Thousand Oaks has adopted an urban growth boundary (Thousand Oaks CURB line). Its purpose, principles, implementation procedures, and methodologies for amendment are set forth in this General Plan amendment.

1. PURPOSE

The City of Thousand Oaks and surrounding area, with its unique viewsheds, watershed lands and proximity to unique soils, micro-climate and hydrology, is a gate-keeper to one of the finest growing regions in the world. Vegetable and fruit production from County of Ventura and, in particular, the Tierra Rejada Valley and alluvial plains adjacent to the City have achieved international acclaim, enhancing the City's economy and reputation.

The purpose of this amendment is to ensure that the preservation of agricultural production, open space, and protection of environmentally sensitive habitat are inviolable against transitory short-term political decisions, and that agricultural, viewshed, watershed and open space lands are not prematurely or unnecessarily converted to other non-agricultural or non-open space uses without public debate and a vote of the people. As importantly, limiting urban sprawl through the use of an Urban Restriction Boundary enhances the sense of community, allows for development unique to the City of Thousand Oaks and promotes the efficient use of the City's infrastructure.

2. PRINCIPLES

Continued urban encroachment into open space, viewshed and watershed areas negatively impacts sensitive environmental areas, intrudes on open space irrevocably changing its utility, diminishes the quality of life and threatens the public health, safety and welfare by causing increased traffic congestion, associated air pollution, alteration of sensitive lands in flood plains and causing potentially serious water problems, such as pollution, depletion and sedimentation of available water resources not only the City of Thousand Oaks, but for its jurisdictional neighbors. Such urban encroachment would eventually result in both the unnecessary, expensive extension of public services and facilities and inevitable conflicts between urban and Open Space/Agricultural uses.

The unique character of the City of Thousand Oaks and quality of life of City residents depend on the protection of a substantial amount of open space, viewshed and watershed. The protection of such lands through the implementation of this measure not only ensures the continued viability of agriculture, but also protects the available water supply and contributes to flood control and the protection of wildlife, environmentally sensitive areas, and irreplaceable natural resources.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

(a) The City of Thousand Oaks hereby establishes a Thousand Oaks City Urban Restriction Boundary (Thousand Oaks CURB). The Thousand Oaks CURB is established coterminous with the Sphere of Influence line established by the Local Agency Formation Commission for the City of Thousand Oaks, as it exists as of January 1, 1998.

(b) Until December 31, 2030, the City of Thousand Oaks shall restrict urban services (except temporary mutual assistance with other jurisdictions) and urbanized uses of land to within the Thousand Oaks City Urban Restriction Boundary, except as provided herein and except for the purpose of completing roadways designated in the Circulation Element of the Thousand Oaks General Plan as of January 1, 1998, construction of public potable water facilities, public schools, public parks or other government facilities. Other than for the exceptions provided herein, upon the effective date of this Urban Restriction Boundary General Plan amendment, the City of Thousand Oaks and its departments, boards, commission, officers and employees shall not grant, or by inaction allow to be approved by operation of law, any General Plan amendment, rezoning, specific plan, subdivision map, conditional use permit, building permit or any other ministerial or discretionary entitlement, which is inconsistent with the purposes of this General Plan amendment, unless in accordance with the amendment procedures of Section 4 of this General Plan amendment.

(c) "Urbanized uses of land" shall mean any development which would require the establishment of new community sewer systems or the significant expansion of existing community sewer systems; or, would result in the creation of residential densities greater than one primary residential unit per 10 acres in area; or, would result in the establishment of commercial or industrial uses which are neither agriculturally-related nor related to the production of mineral resources.

(d) The Land Use Element Map is amended to reflect the existence of the Thousand Oaks Urban Restriction Boundary which is coterminous with the Sphere of Influence line as it exists as of January 1, 1998.

(e) The City Urban Restriction Boundary, as defined herein, may not be amended, altered, revoked or otherwise changed prior to December 31, 2030, except by vote of the people or by the City Council pursuant to the procedures set forth in Section 4 of this General Plan amendment.

4. CHANGES TO BOUNDARY; PROCEDURES

Until December 31, 2030, the foregoing Purposes, Principles and Implementation provisions of this General Plan amendment, and the CURB may be amended only by a vote of the people commenced pursuant to the initiative process by the public, or pursuant to the procedures set forth below.

(a) The City Council may amend the City Urban Restriction Boundary described herein if it deems it to be in the public interest, provided that the amended boundary is within the limits of said Urban Restriction Boundary established by this General Plan amendment.

(b) The City Council, following at least one public hearing for presentations by an applicant and the public, and after compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act, may amend the Urban Restriction Boundary described herein to comply with state law regarding the provision of housing for all economic segments of the community, the City Council may amend the City Urban Restriction Boundary as described herein in order to accommodate lands to be designated for residential uses, provided that no more than 10 acres of land may be brought within the Urban Restriction Boundary for this purpose in any calendar year. Such amendment may be adopted only if the City Council makes each of the following findings:

(1) The land is immediately adjacent to existing compatibly developed areas and the applicant for the inclusion of land within the City of Thousand Oaks Urban Restriction Boundary has provided to the City evidence that the Fire Department, Police Department, Public Works Department, the Community Development Department, applicable water and sewer districts, and the school district, with jurisdiction over such land, have adequate capacity to accommodate the proposed development and provide it with adequate public services; and

(2) That the proposed development will address the highest priority need identified in the analysis by which the City has determined it is not in compliance with state law, i.e., low and very low income housing; and

(3) That there is no existing residentially designated land available within the City Urban Restriction Boundary to accommodate the proposed development; and

(4) That it is not reasonably feasible to accommodate the proposed development by redesignating lands within the City Urban Restriction Boundary.

(c) The City Council, following at least one public hearing for presentation by an applicant and the public, and after compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act, may amend the City Urban Restriction Boundary described herein, based on substantial evidence in the record, if the City Council makes each of the following findings:

(1) Application of the provisions of subsections (a) or (b) of these amendment procedures are unworkable and failure to amend the Urban Restriction Boundary would constitute an unconstitutional taking of a landowner's property for which compensation would be required or would deprive the landowner of a vested right; and

(2) The amendment and associated land use designations will allow additional land uses only to the minimum extent necessary to avoid said unconstitutional taking of the landowner's property or to give effect to the vested right.

(d) The City Council, following at least one public hearing for presentations by an applicant and the public, and after compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act, may place any amendment to the Urban Restriction Boundary or the provisions of this General Plan amendment on the ballot pursuant to the mechanisms provided by state law.

(e) The General Plan may be reorganized and individual provisions, including the provisions of this ordinance, may be renumbered or recorded in the course of ongoing updates of the General Plan in accordance with the requirements of state law.