



The Fullerton Plan

Appendix **M**

Open Space and Conservation Element

City Council Review Draft: June 2026



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Background

The City of Fullerton community values open space as a vital resource that shapes the city's character and enhances quality of life. In Fullerton, open space includes parks, trails, and recreational areas, as well as lands preserved in their natural state for conservation. Thoughtful stewardship of these spaces ensures the long-term health of the environment and protection of natural resources.

The Open Space and Conservation Element combines two related components into one unified framework dedicated to safeguarding, maintaining, and enhancing these resources. Integrating open space and conservation creates a comprehensive approach to land management and sustainability. Both components share the goal of protecting natural resources, improving ecological health, and providing community benefits, ensuring that open spaces support both public access and conservation objectives. Together, open space and conservation advance a holistic vision for the City of Fullerton. This commitment places conservation at the heart of the City's vision, preserving the integrity of its landscapes while promoting sustainability for current and future generations.

- **Open Space**

Open space refers to land that remains largely undeveloped and is often preserved for its scenic, ecological, or buffering functions. It supports park and recreational uses such as trails and viewpoints, and contributes to habitat value, stormwater management, and climate resilience. While not always actively used, open spaces help define the character and environmental function of the City of Fullerton. The purpose of open space in Fullerton is to enhance the overall quality of life and guide the conservation and utilization of natural resources. This includes the management and protection of open space lands throughout the city.

- **Conservation**

Conservation involves the active management and protection of natural resources including vegetation, habitat, wildlife, water, air, and soil throughout the entire city and across all land types. It is not limited to specific areas; rather, it is a citywide approach applied to parks, open spaces, developed areas, waterways, and infrastructure. Conservation efforts include habitat restoration, biodiversity enhancement, ecosystem health improvement, and the sustainable use of environmental resources to benefit future generations.

- **Additional Consideration within the Element- Parks and Recreation**

Parks and recreation typically include landscaped areas and amenities such as playgrounds, sports courts, athletic fields, picnic facilities, and community centers. These spaces provide opportunities for physical activity, social interaction, and access to nature within the urban environment. While parks and recreation is referenced in the Open Space and Conservation Element, it is addressed in greater detail in **'The Fullerton Community'** section of the City's General Plan (**'The Fullerton Plan'**). Because public open spaces often serve both recreational and community purposes, it is important to clarify this connection. The purpose of the Parks and Recreation section within **'The Fullerton Community'** is to guide the acquisition, maintenance, and development of parks, trails, recreational facilities, and programs throughout Fullerton.



Open Space at Mountain View Park in Fullerton



Conservation Space at Robert E. Ward Nature Preserve in Fullerton



1.2 Statutory Requirements

The Open Space and Conservation Element of the General Plan is shaped by state mandates, regional frameworks, and local priorities that work together to protect natural resources, enhance ecological health, and ensure the sustainable management of environmental systems. This Element aligns with key statutes and policies, including the following:

California Government Code Section 65302(e): This code requires all general plans to include an Open Space Element that addresses the long-term preservation of open space lands. This includes open space for natural resource protection, outdoor recreation, hazard mitigation (such as flood and fire zones), and the production of resources like agriculture. Additional considerations include open space that supports military readiness or protects tribal resources.

Quimby Act Government Code Section 66477: Known as the Quimby Act, this code allows cities and counties to require residential subdivisions to dedicate land or pay in-lieu fees for park and recreational purposes. These dedications or fees are then used to fund new park and open space development in consideration of population growth necessitating additional public open spaces.

The Public Park Preservation Act (Sections 5400–Section5409): The Public Park Preservation Act restricts the sale, lease, or disposal of public parkland unless a replacement of equivalent size and function is provided. This protects publicly accessible parks from being converted to non-recreational uses without due process and community benefit.

California Government Code Section 65302(d) – Conservation Element Requirement: The primary legal foundation for the Conservation Element is Government Code Section 65302(d), which requires all general plans to include policies addressing the conservation, development, and use of natural resources. These include watersheds, forests, soils, rivers and other waters, harbors, fisheries, wildlife, minerals, and other natural systems. The statute emphasizes that policies must reflect local conditions, support long-term resource management, and be coordinated with efforts to protect air and water quality.

Senate Bill 1425 (SB 1425): SB 1425, signed into law in September 2022, amended California Government Code Sections 65560–65564. This bill requires every California city and county to update its General Plan's Open Space Element by January 1, 2026. SB 1425 elevates open space planning to a statewide priority by ensuring conservation, equity, and climate adaptation are core components of local policy. The update must include an action program that addresses three key areas:

- **Equitable Access:** Ensure all residents have access to open space, considering social, economic, and racial equity, aligned with the Environmental Justice Element.
- **Climate Resilience and Co-benefit:** Integrate strategies that improve open space's resilience to climate impacts, such as wildfire, flooding, and urban heat, coordinated with the Safety Element.
- **Rewilding Opportunities:** Identify potential areas for ecological restoration and habitat expansion, aligned with the Land Use Element.

Assembly Bill (AB 1889): Wildlife and Habitat Connectivity AB 1889 amended Government Code Section 65302(d), requiring jurisdictions to identify and analyze wildlife connectivity and movement corridors, and consider the impact of development on species movement and ecological resilience. Any impacts and barriers to wildlife movement are then required to be avoided, minimized, or mitigated to the extent feasible. It encourages alignment with State and regional agencies, conservation goals, and efforts in developing wildlife and habitat connectivity strategies.



1.3 Planning Process

1.3.1 Coordinated Planning Process

The update to the City of Fullerton's Open Space and Conservation Element was undertaken as part of a coordinated planning process that also included the development of the City's first Environmental Justice Element. While two separate Elements, this effort reflects a coordinated and integrated approach within 'The Fullerton Plan.' This effort, led by the Community and Economic Development Department, brought together multiple planning disciplines to address open space, parks, conservation, and environmental justice in a unified process.

This coordinated approach fulfills state requirements under SB 1425 and Senate Bill 1000, which guide updates to open space and environmental justice planning. By advancing both the Open Space and Conservation Element update and the new Environmental Justice Element together, the City ensures compliance with these mandates while promoting best practices in comprehensive planning.

The two Elements were designed to complement one another: open space strategies focus on park access, conservation corridors, and multi-functional green spaces, while environmental justice priorities address cumulative environmental burdens and health risks in disadvantaged communities. Both Elements relied on shared technical analyses, including demographic mapping, equity indicators, open space inventories, conservation priorities, and community health data, providing a consistent foundation for policy development and interdepartmental coordination.

Although structured as separate components of 'The Fullerton Plan,' the Open Space and Conservation and Environmental Justice Elements were developed in tandem, with public outreach materials and engagement activities emphasizing their connection. This approach helped residents understand the shared objectives and strengthened confidence in the City's commitment to equity and sustainability.

1.3.2 Community Engagement

Community engagement was a vital component of the planning process for updating the Open Space and Conservation Element. Recognizing that both the Open Space and Conservation Element and Environmental Justice Element shape how residents experience parks, open space, and environmental health, the City implemented a comprehensive outreach strategy to ensure broad participation and meaningful input. The primary engagement activities included a public online survey and an in-person outreach pop-up event. To build awareness of these opportunities, the City launched a dedicated project webpage featuring summaries of engagement activities, major milestones and deliverables, and status updates on both elements. In addition, the City utilized multiple media channels, including a website banner, an email e-blast to residents, Instagram posts, and digital display boards at the transit center. By combining digital tools with in-person engagement, the City successfully reached a broad audience and kept the community informed as planning progressed.

Public Online Survey Overview

A citywide survey was available from October 27, 2025 to November 30, 2025, gathering input on topics such as environmental justice, open space and conservation, equitable access, rewilding, and climate resilience. The survey received 642 responses, demonstrating strong community interest. To maximize participation, the City promoted the survey through multiple channels, including the City's website and website banner, Instagram posts, email e-blasts, and digital display boards. This multi-platform strategy ensured residents from diverse backgrounds had opportunities to engage.

In-Person Pop-up Outreach Event Overview

To complement online engagement, the City hosted a pop-up booth during OktoBOOfest on October 30, 2025, at The Downtown Fullerton Plaza. The four-hour event provided a direct opportunity for residents to learn about the planning process, ask questions, and share ideas. Activities included two interactive boards and two educational boards. Over 85 responses were collected through two interactive activity boards and over 100 flyers were distributed to promote awareness of the planning process and online survey.

Community Engagement Overview Summary



1.3.3 Summary of Community Input

Feedback was collected from the Public Online Survey and In-Person Pop-up Outreach Event, providing both quantitative data and qualitative insights. The key themes and observations from these engagement activities are highlighted below in more detail.

Online Community Survey

The survey collected demographic information such as zip code, age, and race/ethnicity, and explored residents' experiences with open spaces, barriers to access, and ideas for making parks more welcoming and inclusive. It also addressed conservation topics like wildlife habitats, climate adaptation strategies, and areas for preservation or enhancement. Additionally, the survey introduced the concept of environmental justice, asking about awareness, health and environmental concerns, and resources needed to protect vulnerable groups. Participants were also invited to share preferences for future engagement and provide general feedback on the Open Space and Conservation and Environmental Justice Elements. The following summaries are focused on the Open Space and Conservation Element. The responses to the individual questions are summarized in '**Appendix M Supplement: Online Public Survey Responses.**'

Online Survey Responses

- *Open Space Responses*

The survey responses revealed strong engagement with Fullerton's open spaces, with over 85% of participants reporting that they regularly visit parks and trails. Popular destinations include Hillcrest Park, Laguna Lake, Craig Regional Park, and Coyote Hills.

- *Access Responses*

While most residents enjoy these spaces, common barriers to access were identified, such as time constraints, lack of amenities like restrooms, shade, and seating, and safety concerns. Cost and transportation were rarely cited as obstacles. Desired improvements focused on cleaner and more accessible restrooms, better parking, shaded seating and picnic areas, improved maintenance, restrictions on e-bikes, and enhanced safety measures.

- *Re-wilding Responses*

Rewilding and conservation emerged as important themes, with over 78% of respondents aware of wildlife areas in Fullerton, particularly in Coyote Hills, Laguna Lake, and local parks and trails. Suggested adaptation strategies included planting native trees and vegetation, expanding tree canopy for shade, and restoring native habitats. Preservation priorities were noted, with more than 77% identifying areas to protect or enhance, most notably Coyote Hills and other open space corridors.

- *Engagement Responses*

Respondents also expressed preferences for future outreach, favoring partnerships with local nonprofits and schools, community workshops, online surveys, and programs for youth and seniors. About 58% provided an email address to stay informed about long-range planning updates, indicating a strong interest in continued engagement.

In-Person Pop-up Outreach Event

- *Activity Board 1: Open Space Mapping*

Participants were asked to identify parks they visit most often and those where they experience access challenges by placing colored dots on a city map. The responses showed that Rolling Hills School Park, Fullerton Sports Complex, Fullerton Arboretum, Hillcrest Park, and Acacia Park were

among the most frequently visited parks, followed by Adlena Park, Hiltcher Park, Lions Field, and Orangethorpe Park.

- *Activity Board 2: Open-Ended Feedback*

Participants provided input on open spaces and environmental justice. For making open spaces more welcoming and inclusive, suggestions included increasing patrols and park rangers, improving security, adding bathrooms, maintaining public access at school parks, addressing homelessness, installing 'giving boxes' and free libraries, and improving mulch management. To protect vulnerable groups from environmental risks, participants recommended planting more trees, adding water stations, creating community garden pop-ups in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and addressing concerns near railways and industrial corridors

Community Input Key Themes- Open Space and Conservation

- **Access and Trails Improvements**
 - Maintain and improve existing trails and neighborhood walking paths and explore stronger connections between park and trail systems. Provide clearer rules and signage for bicycles and motorized vehicles to better protect pedestrians and hikers.
- **Safety and Enforcement**
 - Continue providing coordinated resources to address issues related to unhoused individuals, substance use, off-leash dogs, and aggressive biking in open spaces. Consider enhanced lighting, visible patrols, and consistent rule enforcement to improve safety and the overall park experience.
- **Amenities and Maintenance**
 - Expand and improve open space amenities by providing more restrooms, ADA-compliant parking, paved and level walking paths, benches, shaded seating, multiple access points, and accommodations for seniors, particularly at neighborhood parks and along trails. Emphasize cleanliness, safety, lighting, and regular maintenance, including trash removal, graffiti cleanup, restroom upkeep, landscaping, trail grooming, sidewalk repairs, and overall park appearance. Prioritize repairs near the most frequently visited open spaces and invest in shade and water amenities at high-use parks and trailheads to address heat exposure and infrastructure needs.
- **Open Space Equity**
 - Increase green space and park investment through pocket parks, green corridors, and expanded tree canopy. Prioritize equitable distribution of open space in underserved areas of Fullerton, with strong support for walkable neighborhood. Consider balance of improved upkeep of existing spaces and the creation of new open spaces and opportunities for converting vacant or underutilized land into public open space.
- **Flexible Programming and Community Use**
 - Support flexible park programming and adaptable spaces for community activities such as live music, farmers markets, and seasonal events. Expand programming to including updated playgrounds, sports courts, dog-friendly areas, community gardens, downtown green spaces, and low-cost or free community events.
- **Community Pride and Stewardship**
 - Build on positive feedback regarding park staff and appreciation for existing amenities by expanding opportunities for environmental education and stewardship. This includes native planting days, habitat restoration projects, and partnerships with local organizations to strengthen community connection to parks and natural areas.



In-Person OktoBOOfest Pop-up Outreach Event in October 2025

1.4 Relationship to Other Documents

1.4.1 The Fullerton Plan

The Open Space and Conservation Element is one of the foundational and integrative components of ‘**The Fullerton Plan**’, the City of Fullerton’s General Plan adopted in 2012. As a long-range policy framework, ‘**The Fullerton Plan**’ guides land use, infrastructure, housing, mobility, and community development through a community-driven vision rooted in sustainability, livability, and equity. These values are deeply embedded in the Open Space and Conservation Element, which seeks to protect, maintain, and enhance Fullerton’s natural resources and open space lands for the benefit of current and future generations.

While ‘**The Fullerton Plan**’ predates recent legislative mandates such as SB 1425, which requires cities to update their open space elements by January 1, 2026, the Open Space and Conservation Element already reflects many of the bill’s priorities. These include ensuring equitable access to open space, enhancing climate resilience, and identifying rewilding opportunities.

The Element complements and reinforces the goals outlined in Part II of ‘**The Fullerton Plan**’ and integrates with the theme areas: Built Environment, Economy, Community, and Natural Environment. This ensures that environmental stewardship and public health are central to Fullerton’s development strategy. It also aligns with the Environmental Justice Element, which is being developed concurrently, by promoting access to green spaces and natural resources for disadvantaged communities.

The Fullerton Built Environment

- **Community Development and Design:** The Open Space and Conservation Element supports inclusive and equitable land use patterns by integrating green infrastructure and preserving natural landscapes near sensitive receptors such as schools, homes, and parks. Green infrastructure refers to the use of natural or landscaped features, like trees, plants, and soils, to manage stormwater, reduce flooding, and improve environmental health. Natural landscapes refers to open spaces, hills, waterways, and native vegetation that provide habitat, scenic value, and environmental benefits within and around Fullerton.
- **Housing:** This Element complements housing goals by ensuring that residential areas, especially those historically underserved, have access to nearby parks, trails, and natural amenities. By preserving open space within and adjacent to housing developments, the Element contributes to healthier living environments and supports long-term housing stability.
- **Mobility and Bicycle:** The Open Space and Conservation Element promotes active transportation, or travel modes that rely on physical activity rather than motorized vehicles, including walking and bicycling.
- **Growth Management and Noise:** Growth policies within the Element emphasize sustainable development that protects natural resources and minimizes environmental impacts.

The Fullerton Economy

- **Economic Development and Revitalization:** The Open Space and Conservation Element supports economic development by enhancing the quality of life and attractiveness of Fullerton’s neighborhoods. Investments in parks, green infrastructure, and natural resource conservation contribute to revitalization efforts that improve infrastructure, attract businesses, and foster community resilience. These improvements are especially impactful in underserved areas, where access to open space can catalyze equitable growth and long-term sustainability.

The Fullerton Community

- **Public Health and Public Safety:** Open space planning directly contributes to public health by promoting access to clean air, shaded environments, and recreational opportunities. It also supports public safety by

integrating climate resilience strategies, such as flood mitigation and heat reduction, into Fullerton's landscape. These efforts align with the Safety Element and help prepare Fullerton for natural hazards.

- Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture, and Education: The Element promotes equitable access to parks, trails, and recreational amenities, recognizing their role in fostering physical activity, mental well-being, and social cohesion. It also supports cultural and educational programming in open spaces, reinforcing their value as community hubs.
- Community Involvement: The Open Space and Conservation Element strengthens civic engagement by ensuring that residents of disadvantaged communities have meaningful opportunities to participate in public decision-making processes that affect their environment and health.

The Fullerton Natural Environment

- Air Quality and Climate Change: The Element advances strategies that improve air quality and reduce urban heat through tree planting, habitat restoration, and green infrastructure. These efforts contribute to climate adaptation and align with broader sustainability goals.
- Water and Integrated Waste Management: Open space planning supports water management in all open spaces.
- Natural Hazards: The Element coincides with the Safety Element that identifies vulnerabilities to flooding, extreme heat, and seismic risks by integrating hazard mitigation into open space planning.

1.4.2 Community Forest Management Plan 2023

The City of Fullerton's '**Community Forest Management Plan 2023**' focuses on maintaining and expanding Fullerton's urban forest to maximize environmental, economic, and public health benefits while reducing risks and costs. Key goals include increasing tree canopy coverage, ensuring tree health and safety through best practices, promoting species and age diversity, and enhancing climate resilience with drought and wildfire mitigation strategies. The '**Community Forest Management Plan**' connects directly to the Open Space and Conservation Element of a city's General Plan as urban forestry is a critical component of preserving and enhancing open space resources. Trees and green corridors contribute to ecological health, biodiversity, and scenic quality, which are core objectives of conservation planning. Additionally, it aligns with policies that protect natural resources and promote sustainable land use, ensuring that public spaces remain accessible, resilient, and environmentally beneficial.

1.4.3 Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)

The City of Fullerton's '**Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)**' is closely integrated with the Open Space and Conservation Element to ensure that the City's open space network supports public safety, emergency preparedness, and post-disaster recovery. Open spaces play a critical role in hazard mitigation, emergency response operations, and the enhancement of community resilience during both natural and human-caused emergencies.

Within the City, certain open spaces serve multiple functions related to emergency management. In particular, the Fullerton Recreational Arena functions as a designated staging area for large animals during evacuation events and as a deployment location for mounted police units during both planned and unplanned operations.

2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The update process for the Open Space and Conservation Element included a comprehensive assessment of existing conditions, featuring a citywide analysis of open space inventory, access and recreational trails, habitat conservation, vegetation profiles, wildlife connectivity and rewilding opportunities, urban canopy coverage, and climate resilience. This assessment provides the foundation for shaping the goals and policies of the Open Space and Conservation Element.

2.1 Open Space Inventory

The City of Fullerton contains 55 public parks and natural open spaces, in addition to 7 joint-use public school parks, which together provide a diverse range of open spaces that enhance environmental quality while offering recreational and ecological value. Collectively, these public open spaces account for 1,383 acres or 10% of the City's total acreage, as shown in **Exhibit 2-1: Open Space Inventory**. Fullerton's open space and habitat network consists of parks, greenbelts, and nature preserves designed to protect biodiversity while providing recreational opportunities. Public open space in Fullerton can be categorized into the following types:

- **Public Parks**
Fullerton offers a wide variety of public parks with amenities such as playgrounds, sports fields, picnic areas, walking trails, and passive open space. These parks serve as community gathering spaces and promote active lifestyles. These parks are managed by the City. Regional parks maintained by Orange County, such as Craig Regional Park and Ralph B. Clark Park, are also considered public parks.
- **Joint-Use School Parks**
Several parks are developed in partnership with local schools, allowing shared use of athletic fields and playgrounds subject to an Agreement between the Fullerton School District and the City of Fullerton. These parks are open to the public for recreation after school hours (starting at 4:00 p.m. on weekdays), during school vacations, and on weekends when no school activities are scheduled. Field use is prioritized for Fullerton youth sports organizations. Recreation-based groups with at least 80% of participants living in Fullerton receive first priority, while competitive groups with at least 55% local participants receive second priority.
- **Habitat Conservation Areas**
Protected natural areas like Robert E. Ward Nature Preserve conserve native plant communities and wildlife habitats. These spaces are managed to preserve biodiversity and offer passive recreation opportunities such as hiking and nature observation.
- **Other Open Spaces**
This category includes golf courses, arboretums, and specialized parks that strengthen Fullerton's green infrastructure.

While recreation is often included within public parks, detailed discussion of recreation areas is provided in Parks and Recreation in 'The Fullerton Community' section of 'The Fullerton Plan.'

TABLE 2-1: FULLERTON OPEN SPACE INVENTORY SUMMARY

OPEN SPACE TYPE	COUNT OF OPEN SPACES	TOTAL ACRES
Public Parks	50	~665
Joint-Use School Parks	7	~18
Habitat Conservation Areas	5	~700
Robert E Ward Preserve	1	~72
All Other Habitat Conservation Areas	4	~628
Other Open Spaces	4	n/a

Open Space Types

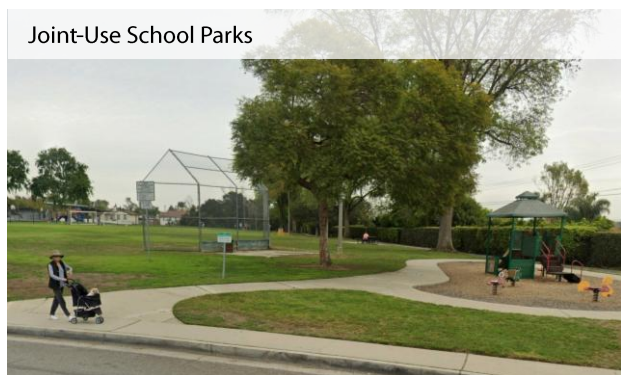
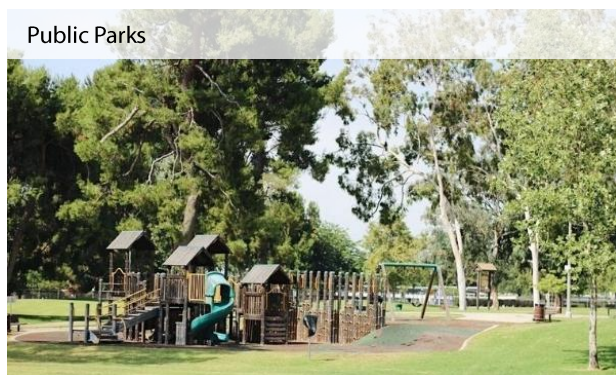
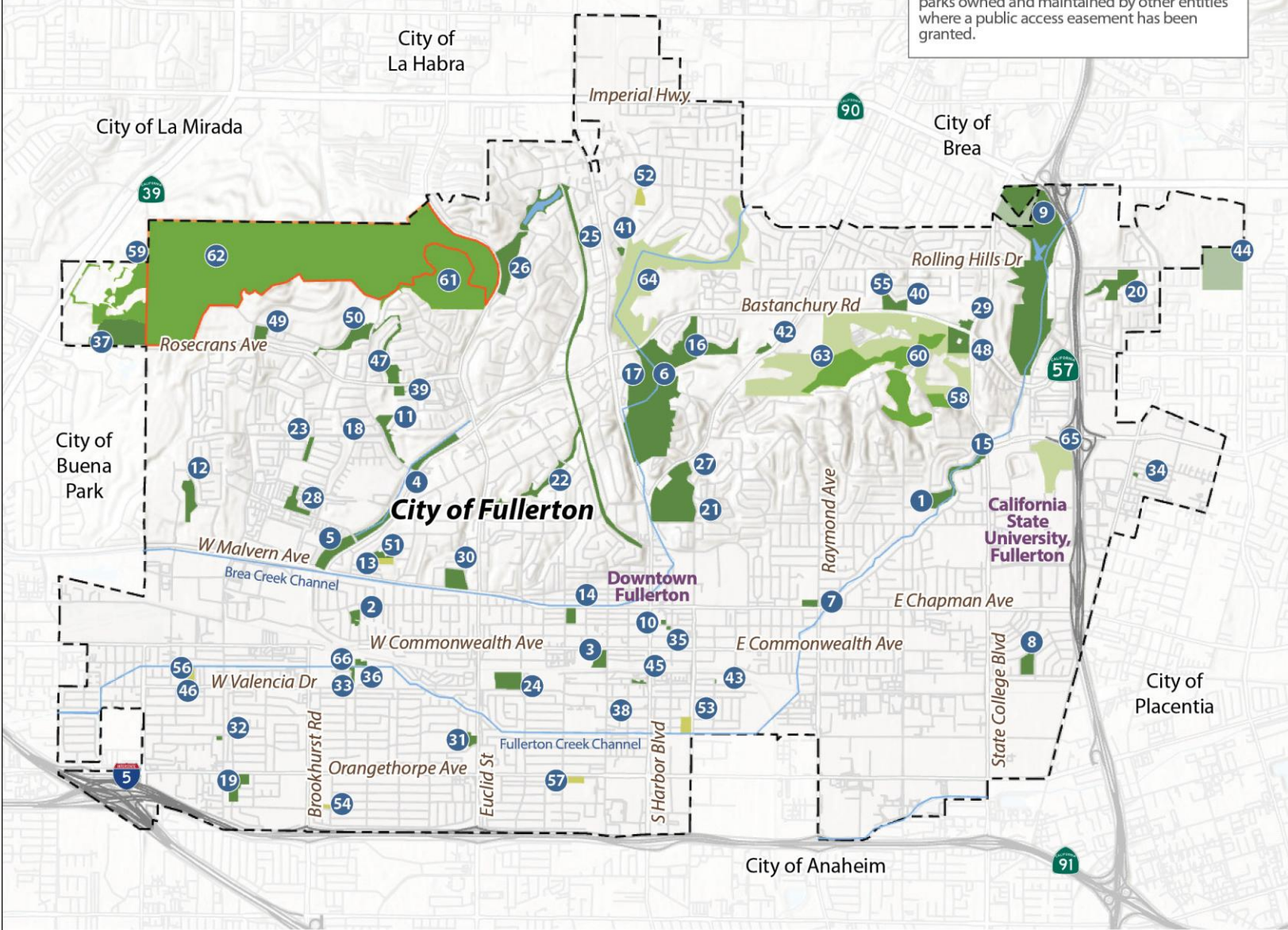


Exhibit 2-1: Open Space Inventory

* Indicates individual public parks operated by Orange County; all other public parks are owned—or, if not owned, managed—by the City of Fullerton. This category also includes parks owned and maintained by other entities where a public access easement has been granted.



Open Space Inventory City of Fullerton

- Public Parks
- Joint-Use School Parks
- Habitat Conservation Areas
- Other Open Spaces
- City of Fullerton Boundary

Public Parks

- 1 Acacia Park
- 2 Adlena Park
- 3 Amerige Park
- 4 Bastanchury Greenbelt
- 5 Bastanchury Park
- 6 Brea Dam Recreational Park
- 7 Byerrum Park
- 8 Chapman Park
- 9 Craig Regional Park*
- 10 Downtown Plaza
- 11 Edward H. White II Park
- 12 Emery Park
- 13 Fern Drive Park
- 14 Ford Park
- 15 Fullerton Creek Greenbelt
- 16 Fullerton Sports Complex
- 17 Fullerton Tennis Center
- 18 Gardner Park
- 19 Gilbert Park
- 20 Gilman Park

- 21 Hillcrest Park
- 22 Hiltcher Park
- 23 Holcomb Park
- 24 Independence Park
- 25 Juanita Cooke Greenbelt
- 26 Laguna Lake Park
- 27 Lions Field
- 28 McDermont Park
- 29 Mountain View Park
- 30 Muckenthaler Cultural Ctr.
- 31 Nicholas Park
- 32 Olive Park
- 33 Pacific Drive Park
- 34 Pearl Park
- 35 Plaza Park
- 36 Pooch Park
- 37 Ralph B. Clark Park*
- 38 Richman Park
- 39 Roger B. Chaffee Park
- 40 Rolling Hills Park
- 41 San Juan Park

- 42 Trail Rest Park
- 43 Truslow Park
- 44 Tri City Park*
- 45 Union Pacific Park
- 46 Valencia Park
- 47 Virgil "Gus" Grissom Park
- 48 Vista Park
- 49 West Coyote Hills Park
- 50 West Coyote Hills Tree Park

Joint-Use School Parks

- 51 Fern School Park
- 52 Hermosa School Park
- 53 Lemon Park
- 54 Orangethorpe Park
- 55 Rolling Hills School Park
- 56 Valencia School Park
- 57 Woodcrest Park

Habitat Conservation Areas

- 58 Coyote Hills East Preserve
- 59 Oak Grove Vista
- 60 Panorama Nature Preserve
- 61 Robert E. Ward Nature Preserve
- 62 West Coyote Hills

Other Open Spaces

- 63 Coyote Hills Golf Course
- 64 Fullerton Golf Course
- 65 Fullerton Arboretum
- 66 Fullerton Public Library - Hunt Branch



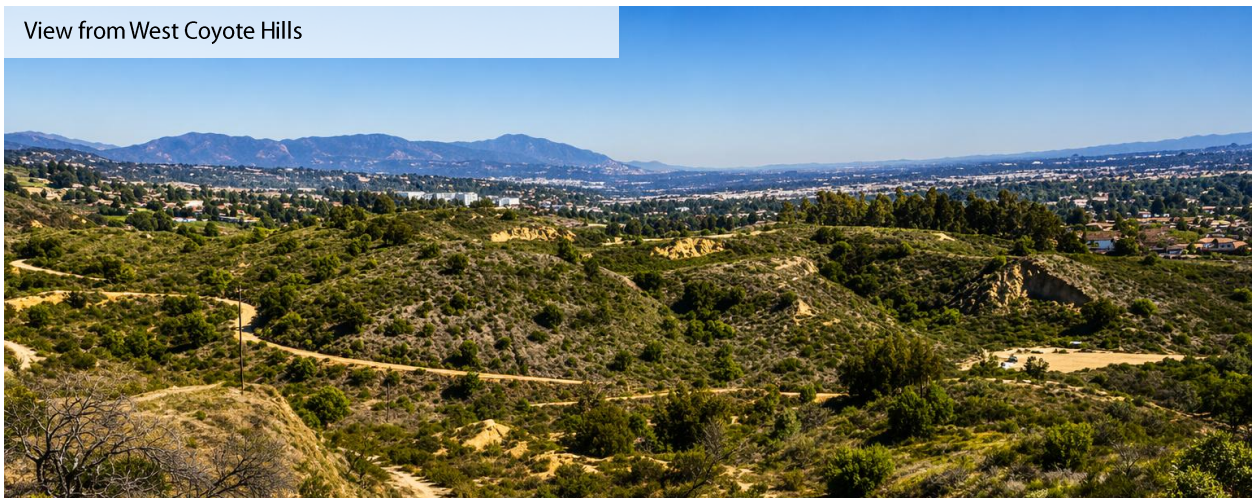
2.2 West Coyote Hills

West Coyote Hills is a 510-acre natural open space in northwest Fullerton, featuring coastal sage scrub habitats that support threatened species such as the California gnatcatcher and cactus wren. For decades, the site has been at the center of debate between development proposals, planning up to 760 homes on 179 acres, and conservation efforts focused on preserving continuous habitat. In 2012, Fullerton voters approved Measure W, rejecting earlier development plans. Despite this, Chevron-Pacific Coast Homes secured a tract map that dedicated over 220 acres to open space and allowed the City to purchase additional parcels, with Fullerton prevailing in litigation in 2018. By December 2021, the City finalized the acquisition of approximately 26.5 acres across two parcels. This acquisition built upon the existing 72.3-acre Robert E. Ward Nature Preserve, acquired by the City in the 1970s, and, together with adjacent privately held land subject to density-shift restrictions established through the “Path Forward” process following the 2012 Measure W referendum (sponsored by the Friends of Coyote Hills), created a contiguous expanse of protected habitat totaling approximately 218 acres.

Efforts continue to secure and conserve the remaining western portion (approximately 292 acres). In March 2024, collaborative grant funding from state agencies, including the Coastal Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Board, San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, supported “Phase II” acquisitions to expand preserved habitat, with goals of climate resilience, flood protection, and wildfire buffering. Pending future federal funding, development on the remaining land may still occur.

Preserving this land offers significant regional benefits, including the rare opportunity to protect open space in one of California’s most urbanized regions. It provides much-needed parkland, creates new recreational opportunities, serves as an educational resource for nearby schools and universities, and expands critical habitat for the federally protected California gnatcatcher, advancing biodiversity and conservation goals. The Open Space and Conservation Element reflects West Coyote Hills in its current state as a habitat conservation area while acknowledging the potential for future development.

View from West Coyote Hills



2.3 Access To Open Space

2.3.1 Primary Recreational Trails

Recreational trails in Fullerton are integrated with the city’s open space network, creating connections between parks, neighborhoods, and natural areas. The City of Fullerton’s trail system accommodates a variety of users, including walkers, hikers, bicyclists, and equestrian users, serving both recreational and active transportation purposes. Walkers and hikers primarily use trails for exercise, leisure, and access to natural areas, while bicyclists use designated routes for recreation and connectivity between neighborhoods and destinations. Equestrian users access trails where permitted and where trail design and surface conditions support shared use. The City of Fullerton offers multi-use trails. The only trail which does not allow dogs or horses is the West Coyote Hills Trail. Popular multi-use trails, like the East Coyote Hills Trail and the Juanita Cooke Greenbelt, link parks such as Laguna Lake and Craig Regional Park. These trails often serve as green corridors for both passive and active recreation as shown in **Exhibit 2-2: Primary Recreational Trails Overlay**. By linking urban parks with regional open spaces, Fullerton’s recreational trails promote outdoor recreation, sustainability, and wildlife movement, making it a vital component of Fullerton’s open space and climate resilience strategy.

Recreational Trail Types

Hiking



Walking



Bicycling

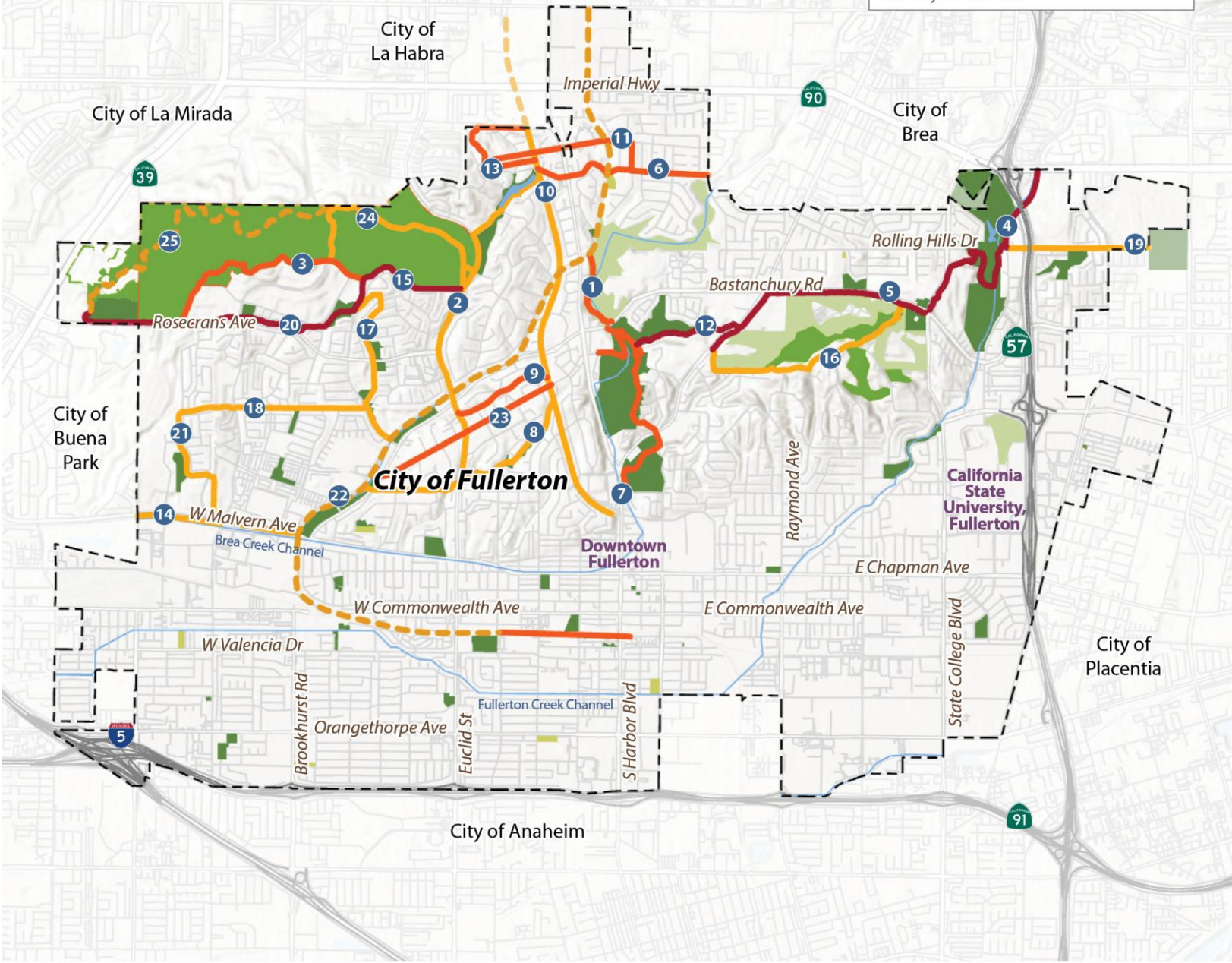


Equestrian



Exhibit 2-2: Primary Recreational Trails Overlay

Fullerton's trail system is predominantly multi-use, providing varied access for hikers, equestrians, cyclists, and others. The only trail which does not allow dogs or horses is Trail #24, West Coyote Hills Trail.



Primary Recreational Trails Overlay

City of Fullerton

- Public Parks
- Joint-Use School Parks
- Habitat Conservation Areas
- Other Open Spaces
- City of Fullerton Boundary
- Regional Trail
- Backbone Trail
- Connector Trail
- Trail Not Yet Constructed/ or Not Yet Developed

Recreational Trails

- 1 Brea Dam Trail
- 2 Bud Turner Trail
- 3 Castletwood Trail
- 4 Craig Regional Park Trail
- 5 East Coyote Hills Trail
- 6 Hermosa "Street Trail"
- 7 Hillcrest Park Trail
- 8 Hiltcher Park Trail
- 9 Horse Alley
- 10 Juanita Cooke Greenbelt and Trail
- 11 Las Palmas "Street Trail"
- 12 Lost Trail
- 13 Lucy Van Der Hoff Trail
- 14 Malvern Trail
- 15 Nora Kuttner Trail
- 16 Panorama Trail
- 17 Parks Road Trail
- 18 Pioneer Trail
- 19 Rolling Hills "Street Trail"
- 20 Rosecrans Trail
- 21 Sally Pekarek Trail
- 22 Union Pacific Right of Way Trail
- 23 Valencia Mesa "Street Trail"
- 24 West Coyote Hills Trail (Official)
- 25 West Coyote Hills Trail (Undeveloped)



Source: City of Fullerton, CA Open Data Portal, Esri; Projection: California State Plane Coordinate System Zone 6, NAD 83

2.3.2 Open Space Access by Census Tracts

Open spaces play a vital role in promoting public health by encouraging physical activity, reducing chronic disease, improving mental well-being, fostering community connections, and supporting resilience to climate change and pollution. One way to measure park access is by the proximity of a resident's home to a park. The California Healthy Places Index (HPI) Park Access indicator, provided by the California Department of Public Health, compares park access conditions in Fullerton to other cities across the state. This indicator measures the percentage of the population living within a half-mile of a park, beach, or open space larger than one acre, as shown in **Exhibit 2-3: Open Space Access by Census Tract**. This is measured at the Census Tract level. The half-mile distance represents about a 10-minute walk for most people.

As a city, Fullerton ranks healthier than 82.4% of other California cities and towns in terms of park access. This ranking reflects the current accessible open space, including all of West Coyote Hills. However, several census tracts have below average access ratings. These below average ratings include areas with higher concentrations of industrial uses and the California State University Fullerton campus, where open space is not counted as public parkland, skewing results. Conversely, tracts with established trail networks show higher levels of access, demonstrating the importance of connectivity in improving park availability. Given the importance of public transit in Fullerton, opportunities for transit enhancements related to open space access improvements are encouraged and should be further studied.



2.3.3 Open Space Visitation

While Fullerton has strong overall open space coverage, several factors influence visitation to parks and trails. During the community engagement process, the most commonly visited open spaces noted were larger park networks, including Hillcrest Park, Laguna Lake, Craig Regional Park, Coyote Hills East Preserve, and Acacia Park. The most frequently referenced trails were the Hiltcher Trail and Juanita Cooke Trail. Responses were received from residents across all districts, indicating that community members from Districts 4 and 5 regularly travel to the larger park networks located in north Fullerton. Many respondents also referenced regional preserves, arboretums, and smaller neighborhood parks, demonstrating a strong preference for both large open spaces and local walking trails.

2.3.4 Open Space Access by a Half Mile Buffer

The California Department of Parks and Recreation recommends using a half mile buffer from parks and open spaces as an access metric. A half mile is widely recognized as an approximate 10-minute walk for most people, making it a realistic measure of whether a park is close enough for regular use. This distance assesses whether residents can reasonably access parks without relying on a vehicle, particularly for daily recreation and physical activity. The greatest gaps or areas not covered by the half mile buffer include the east portion of District 5, the west portion of District 4, and the northernmost portion of District 2 as shown in **Exhibit 2-4: Open Space Access by a Half Mile Buffer**.

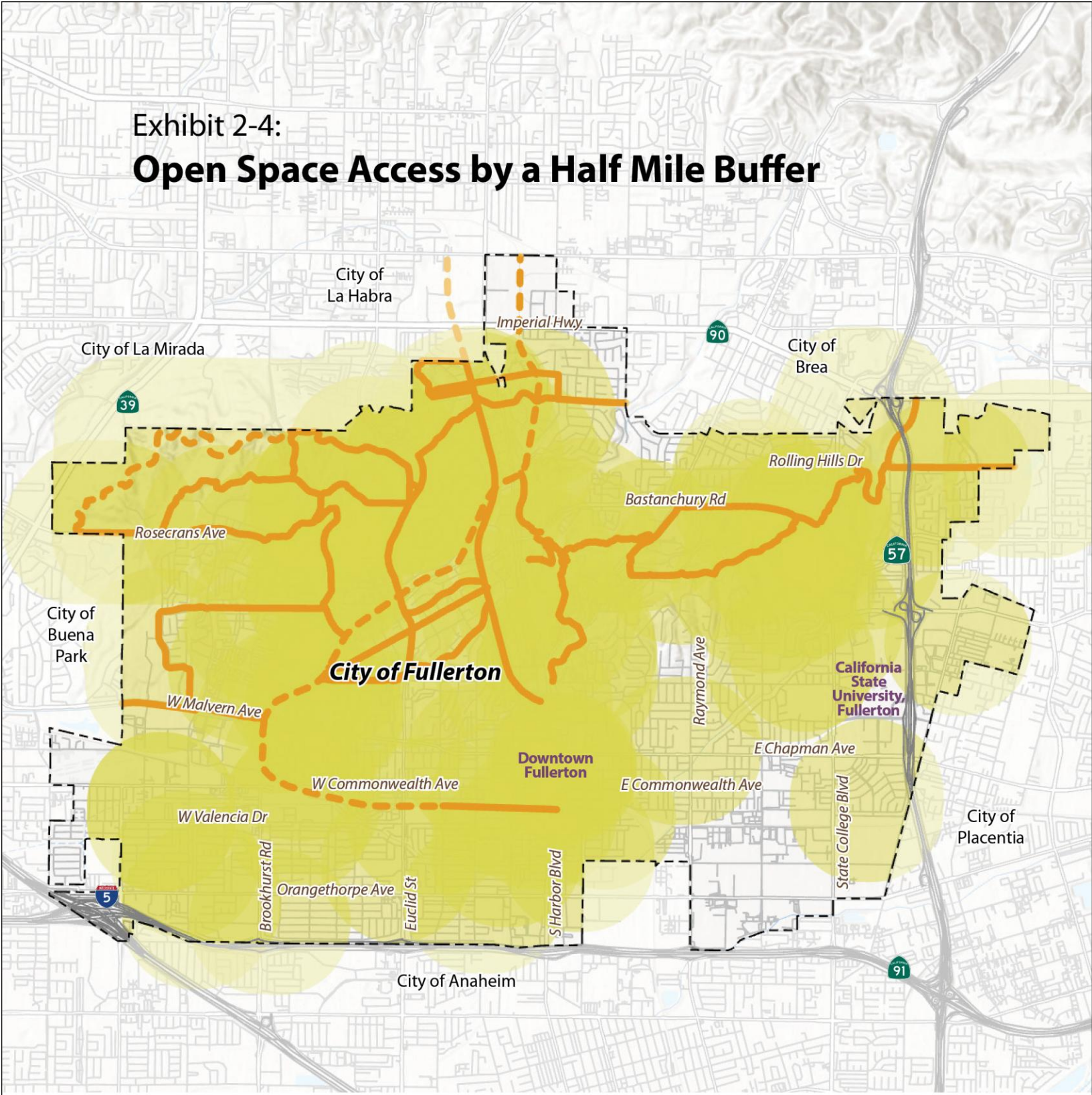
2.3.5 Access and Community Gaps

Based on the community engagement, residents reported broad use of open spaces but also identified several barriers that limit visitation. The most commonly cited challenges were time constraints and a lack of basic amenities, such as restrooms, seating, and lighting. Safety concerns were also consistently raised across all districts. Among respondents who identified access issues, the most common themes included homelessness and related safety concerns, parking difficulties, and poor restroom conditions or the absence of restrooms altogether. Additional concerns were raised regarding insufficient green and centrally located open spaces, including the overall number of parks, uneven distribution by neighborhood, and the lack of a central community gathering space. These concerns were most pronounced in Districts 3, 4, and 5.

2.3.6 Opportunities

Community engagement revealed a broad range of opportunities to improve the inclusivity and functionality of open spaces. The most commonly identified improvements citywide included adding clean, accessible restrooms, particularly at parks where facilities are currently lacking, along with shaded seating areas, benches, and drinking water fountains. Respondents also emphasized the importance of safety and security enhancements, including improved lighting, increased patrol presence, addressing homelessness, and restricting e-bikes and motorized vehicles on trails. Community voices from Districts 4 and 5 highlighted the need for increased neighborhood-level open space, particularly walkable parks within 15 minutes of homes and a more equitable distribution of parks in underserved areas. There was significant interest in converting vacant or underutilized land into walkable neighborhood parks. Additional priorities included improved maintenance, graffiti removal, and enhanced landscaping, with an emphasis on adding more trees and greenery. Respondents frequently noted the need for accessibility upgrades for people with disabilities, updated playgrounds, and stronger connectivity between parks, including rail-to-trail conversions. Parking-related priorities included requests for accessible parking, time-limited parking enforcement near campuses, free or reduced parking at select parks, and safer walking and biking routes to open spaces. Overall, community feedback reflects a strong desire to improve existing open spaces and supporting infrastructure, while expanding opportunities for additional open space to serve growing community needs.

Exhibit 2-4: Open Space Access by a Half Mile Buffer



Open Space Access by a Half Mile Buffer

City of Fullerton

Half mile buffer from a public park or open space in Fullerton

Within the state of California, 21% of people live over a half mile from a park or open space.

City of Fullerton

City of Fullerton Boundary

Primary Recreational Trails

Trail Not Yet Constructed/
or Not Yet Developed



Source: City of Fullerton, CA Open Data Portal, Esri;
Projection: California State Plane Coordinate System Zone 6, NAD 83

2.4 Habitat Conservation

2.4.1 Existing Vegetation Types

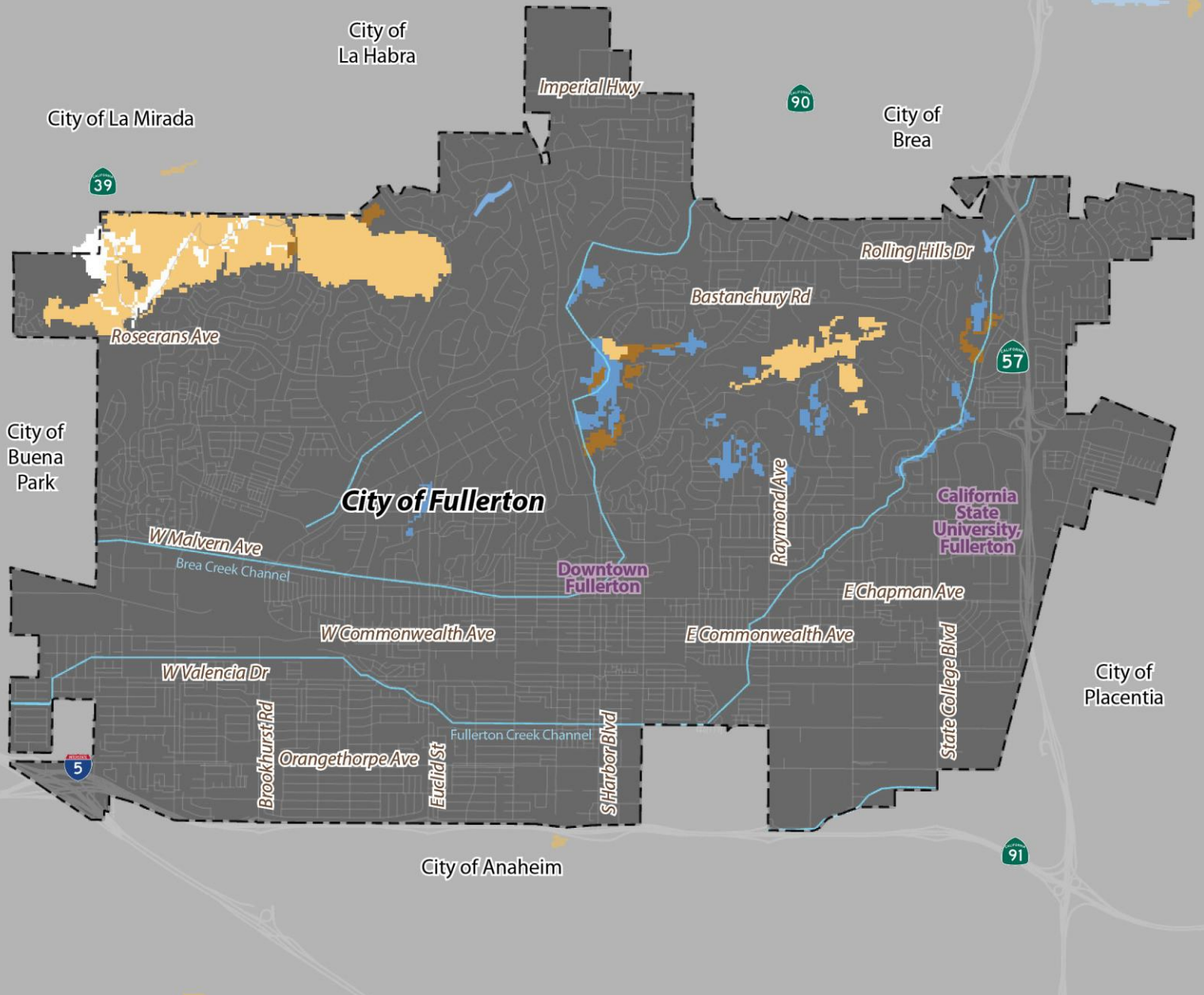
Fullerton's natural open spaces are concentrated in its hillsides, parks, and ecological reserves, offering a mix of native habitats that collectively support biodiversity, provide scenic landscapes, and serve as vital resources for outdoor recreation and environmental stewardship. At a high level, vegetation within Fullerton can be summarized using the California Multi-Source Vegetation Layer, a statewide dataset that identifies concentrations of vegetation types. While not exhaustive, this information helps highlight existing vegetation and riparian zones that can guide efforts to improve, enhance, or expand habitat connectivity within Fullerton.

The California Multi-Source Vegetation Layer integrates data from CAL FIRE's Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's VegCAMP program, and the USDA Forest Service Remote Sensing Lab. Published on the CAL FIRE Portal, the dataset supports fire risk modeling, wildlife habitat analysis, land-use planning, and other resource management functions. It includes two main views: detailed habitat classes and an aggregated set of 13 major land cover types for statewide consistency. Within Fullerton, the primary vegetation types from these categories include the following as shown in **Exhibit 2-5: Vegetation Types**:

- **Shrub**
Represented by Coastal Sage Scrub and Chaparral communities, these habitats feature drought-tolerant plants such as California sagebrush, buckwheat, and laurel sumac. Found on hillsides and open slopes, they provide critical habitat for species like the California gnatcatcher and other birds adapted to dry, scrubby environments, including areas like West Coyote Hills, Panorama Nature Preserve, and south of Coyote Hills Golf Course.
- **Barren**
This vegetation type includes exposed rock outcrops, sandy patches, and disturbed soils with little or no vegetation. In Fullerton, these areas occur on rocky ridges and support specialized plants and reptiles adapted to sun-exposed conditions.
- **Hardwood Woodland**
Hardwood woodland is dominated by oak species such as coast live oak, often mixed with understory shrubs and grasses. These woodlands occur in riparian corridors and foothill zones, such as Brea Dam Park, providing shade, soil stability, and habitat for mammals, birds, and pollinators.
- **Herbaceous**
Open grasslands dominated by annual grasses and wildflowers are the main vegetation type in herbaceous communities in Fullerton. These are common in parks, open spaces, and transitional zones between urban development and natural habitats, such as Brea Dam Park and Craig Regional Park. These areas support ground-nesting birds, small mammals, and seasonal pollinators.

In addition to the vegetation types, riparian zones, or areas adjacent to rivers, streams, and other surface waters as designated by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), were overlaid on **Exhibit 2-5: Vegetation Types**. These zones are critical for biodiversity, water quality, and ecosystem services, and they play a key role in habitat connectivity. In Fullerton, watershed health is closely connected to habitat quality, wildlife corridors, groundwater recharge, water quality, and climate resilience, serving as a critical foundation for sustaining ecological systems, protecting water resources, and helping the city adapt to climate-related challenges. **Chapter 16: Water** of **'The Fullerton Plan'** addresses watershed health in greater detail.

Exhibit 2-5: Vegetation Types






Vegetation Types

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection 2025

- | | |
|---|--|
|  Shrub |  Barren/Other |
|  Herbaceous |  Urban |
|  Hardwood Woodland | |

City of Fullerton

- | |
|--|
|  City of Fullerton Boundary |
|  Riparian Zones |
|  Vernal Streams or Channels |



Source: California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, City of Fullerton, CA Open Data Portal, Esri; Projection: California State Plane Coordinate System Zone 6, NAD 83

2.5 Wildlife Connectivity and Re-wilding Opportunities

The City of Fullerton supports a mix of urban-adapted wildlife and remnants of native ecosystems, creating unique biodiversity within a highly developed area. Historically, Fullerton was part of coastal sage scrub and oak woodland ecosystems, featuring plants such as California sagebrush, buckwheat, and coast live oak, while riparian zones along creeks supported willows and sycamores. Today, much of the vegetation consists of ornamental or drought-tolerant landscaping, but restoration efforts showcase native flora like manzanita, toyon, and native grasses.

Fullerton's uniqueness lies in its urban biodiversity hotspots, which preserve native species and attract migratory birds, creating refuges amid dense development. Its green corridors and creek systems act as lifelines for wildlife movement in an otherwise fragmented environment, and the blend of historic native vegetation with modern conservation landscaping offers opportunities for re-wilding and ecological education. Native species documented in or near Fullerton such as the Intermediate Mariposa Lily, Burrowing Owl, California Gnatcatcher, Coastal Cactus Wren, and other birds of special concern should be considered in future open space planning and management decisions.

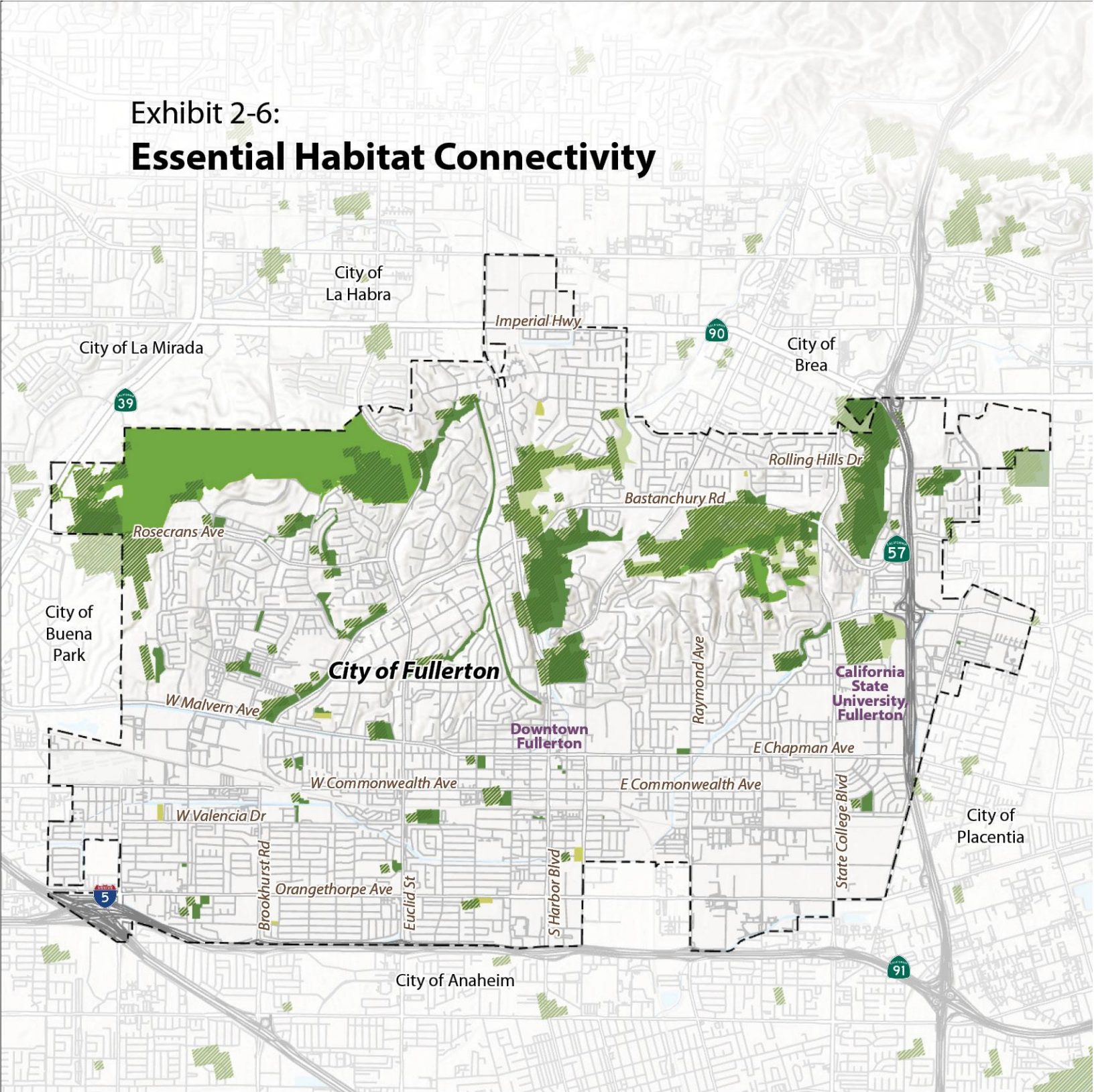
The California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project, commissioned by Caltrans and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, emphasizes that a functional network of connected wildlands is essential to sustaining California's diverse natural communities in the face of development and climate change. The Terrestrial Connectivity dataset, part of California's Areas of Conservation Emphasis (ACE), provides a statewide assessment of how well areas support wildlife movement and ecological linkages. It integrates multiple sources, including statewide connectivity models, regional studies, and GPS-collar data to identify priority areas for maintaining or improving connectivity. High-ranking connectivity areas often contain documented wildlife corridors or habitat linkages.

According to the ACE data, Fullerton is classified as having **Limited Connectivity Opportunity** for larger terrestrial connectivity. This is primarily due to:

1. Extensive urban development that limits wildlife corridors and habitat linkages.
2. Fragmented landscapes where roads and residential neighborhoods create significant barriers to species movement.
3. Recreational or park-like environments that provide open space but do not function as continuous wildlife habitat.
4. Major highways surrounding Fullerton that further disrupt ecological connectivity.

However, with strategic design and targeted improvements, these spaces can support re-wilding efforts that meet both human and ecological needs at a more localized scale. **Exhibit 2-6: Essential Habitat Connectivity** identifies smaller, relatively natural habitat blocks that support biodiversity and areas essential for ecological connectivity between them. These natural landscape blocks, extend into existing open spaces within Fullerton and represent opportunities for further study and refinement through detailed linkage designs tailored to species and ecological processes. Re-wilding at a smaller scale, such as enhancing habitats, planting suitable vegetation, and implementing wildlife-friendly infrastructure like culverts or buffer zones, can create pathways for wildlife movement and contribute to a more resilient and biodiverse city.

Exhibit 2-6: Essential Habitat Connectivity



Essential Habitat Connectivity California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2024

 Essential Habitat Connectivity- Natural Small Areas*

*The dataset is built from several sources, including land cover data, information on roads and urban development, as well as topography and hydrology.

City of Fullerton

-  Public Parks
-  Joint-Use School Parks
-  Habitat Conservation Areas
-  Other Open Spaces
-  City of Fullerton Boundary



2.6 Climate Vulnerability and Resilience

2.6.1 Overview

Both open space and conservation in Fullerton face increasing climate vulnerabilities, particularly in wildfire-prone and flood-sensitive areas, while resilience efforts aim to integrate ecological preservation with hazard mitigation and equitable access. These open spaces present a strong opportunity to build climate resilience while supporting conservation and community well-being.

Updates to the General Plan emphasize climate adaptation and environmental justice, ensuring that parks and natural areas remain safe, accessible, and sustainable for all residents. By incorporating native vegetation, shade trees, and strategic maintenance into open space planning, Fullerton is creating climate-ready landscapes that preserve biodiversity, improve public safety, and foster a healthier, more resilient community.

The City of Fullerton's 'Climate Action Plan' connects to open space in several meaningful ways. By prioritizing the preservation and enhancement of open spaces including parks, protected lands, and tree canopy, the plan supports carbon sequestration, flood mitigation, and overall ecosystem health.

Park Vulnerability

Park resilience in Fullerton depends on how well infrastructure can withstand extreme heat, drought, and intense storms. Parks in Fullerton have various levels of shade structures. Lack of shade can leave playgrounds and seating areas exposed to heat, while asphalt and concrete surfaces amplify temperatures. Aging irrigation systems and water-intensive turf make parks vulnerable during drought, highlighting the need for efficient watering and drought-tolerant landscaping. Improving resilience involves expanding tree canopy and shade structures, upgrading to smart irrigation systems, incorporating permeable surfaces and green infrastructure for stormwater management, and using durable, climate-ready materials for park amenities.

Trails and Access Vulnerability

Resilient access in Fullerton requires evaluating how trails may be impacted by climate hazards such as flooding, erosion, and extreme heat. Many multi-use trails are vulnerable to storm-related flooding and erosion, especially where paths cross low-lying areas or lack proper drainage. Trails with steep grades or unpaved surfaces can experience washouts during intense rain events, reducing accessibility and increasing maintenance needs. Extreme heat poses another challenge, as exposed trails without adequate shade structures or tree canopy can create unsafe conditions for users, particularly during prolonged heat waves. Improving resilience can involve permeable paving, bioswales (shallow, landscaped channel that captures rainwater and lets it slowly soak into the ground while filtering out pollutants), and stormwater diversion features to reduce flood risk, while expanding tree canopy and shade structures along trails to mitigate heat exposure. These measures ensure that recreational and commuter routes remain safe, functional, and climate ready.

Community engagement responses strongly supported the planting of native trees and vegetation, the expansion of tree canopy for shade, and the protection and restoration of native habitats as top priorities for addressing climate vulnerability and building resilience. Respondents emphasized the importance of creating wildlife corridors and promoting wildlife-friendly development. The feedback reflects strong community interest in habitat restoration, tree canopy expansion, and wildlife connectivity, combined with sustainable development practices and active community involvement.

2.7 Supporting Open Space and Conservation Data

2.7.1 Special Management of Open Space

Open space in Fullerton is closely tied to hazard planning due to risks from extreme weather and wildfires. For this reason, the Open Space Element must align with the City's Safety Element to ensure that open spaces incorporate wildfire buffers, flood mitigation, and emergency access improvements while balancing ecological preservation and public safety.

- **Wildfires**
Areas such as West and East Coyote Hills fall within Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, requiring vegetation management, defensible space, and fire-resistant infrastructure to reduce wildfire threats.¹ Properties located here and in some other smaller areas are susceptible to the threat of wildfires as they are located near open space areas and hillsides containing dense vegetation.
- **Drought**
Prolonged drought and heat stress increase fire risk and impact native vegetation, making the use of drought-tolerant species and efficient irrigation strategies essential for resilience.
- **Flooding**
Flood-prone zones along the Coyote Creek floodplain require stormwater controls, bioswales, and limits on impervious surfaces to mitigate flooding during heavy rains. Hillsides and slopes in open space areas are also vulnerable to landslides when soils become saturated, necessitating erosion control and slope stabilization measures.

2.7.2 Urban Heat Islands

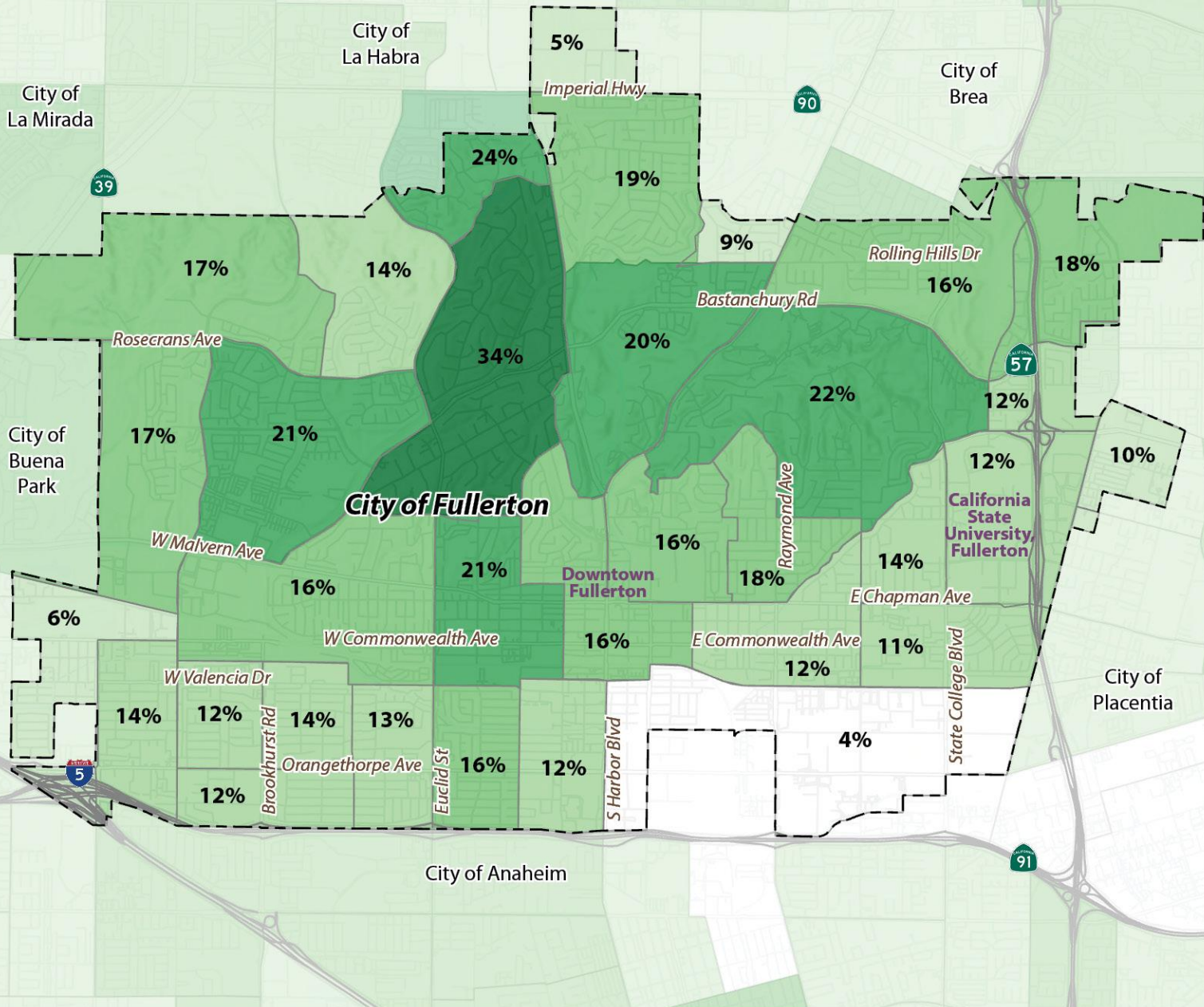
As cities grow and paved surfaces increase, the urban heat island effect raises air temperatures, especially in areas with little tree canopy. Trees help cool cities by shading hard surfaces and releasing moisture through evapotranspiration. Increasing canopy cover over time reduces heat by shading streets, sidewalks, and commercial areas, lowering pavement and air temperatures. This cooling effect is well documented and also creates microclimates that support more diverse landscaping. Expanding tree canopy provides multiple benefits, including reducing summer heat and air pollution, improving property values, and enhancing wildlife habitat.

According to Fullerton's **'Community Forest Management Plan'**, Fullerton's urban tree canopy is 27.28%, which is relatively high for Southern California compared to the Orange County average of 19.54%. This means Fullerton has a denser tree cover per square mile than most other cities in the region.

The California Urban Tree Canopy Viewer, developed by CAL FIRE and the USDA Forest Service, provides high-resolution canopy data from 2022 and helps visualize tree distribution across urban areas. In Fullerton, the relationship between canopy cover and land use reveals where improvements can be made as shown in **Exhibit 2-7: Percent Urban Canopy Cover by Census Tract**. Business facilities, such as industrial parks, have the least canopy, while residential neighborhoods show the highest coverage, reflecting residents' appreciation for trees and the City's strong right-of-way management. Schools and religious sites offer moderate greenspace. Downtown mixed-use areas are well planned but limited in planting space.

¹ CAL FIRE. "Fire Hazard Severity Zones | OSFM." osfm.fire.ca.gov, 2025, osfm.fire.ca.gov/what-we-do/community-wildfire-preparedness-and-mitigation/fire-hazard-severity-zones.

Exhibit 2-7: Percent Urban Canopy Cover by Census Tract



Percent Urban Canopy Cover by Census Tract

USFS/CAL FIRE Percent Urban Canopy Cover 2022



City of Fullerton

City of Fullerton Boundary

California's urban tree canopy covers 14.5 % of the state's urban areas.



2.7.3 Military Support

Military activity in Fullerton is connected to the City's Open Space and Conservation Element through the use of open space for military purposes, either as a protected buffer zone or by co-locating facilities adjacent to park spaces, depending on the intended use. The City of Fullerton has some military presence, through military-owned properties within city limits.

The California National Guard Armory is located at 400 S. Brookhurst Road in Fullerton. It serves as the base for Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 160th Infantry Regiment and is used for military activities such as training, equipment storage, and housing National Guard units. The facility has also supported county organizations and community groups, including providing overnight shelter for the homeless through the Orange County Armory Emergency Shelter Program. This site does not currently include open space as buffer areas.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) owns and manages both Brea Dam and Fullerton Dam, located in Fullerton. These dams are part of the USACE Los Angeles District's flood control projects for the Los Angeles County Drainage Area. They are single-purpose flood control projects designed to manage flooding, ensure public safety, and provide recreational opportunities adjacent to the reservoir basins.

- The Brea Dam is located near the fork of Brea Boulevard and Harbor Boulevard within Brea Dam Park; it was authorized in 1936 and completed in 1942. The dam controls the drainage area of Brea Creek and its tributaries. The surrounding park offers recreation trails, open space, and picnic areas.
- The Fullerton Dam construction began in June 1940 and was completed in May 1941. The dam is located just west of the 57 Freeway at Bastanchury Road and controls the drainage area of Fullerton Creek and its tributaries. It is situated at the southern end of Craig Regional Park, which spans 124 acres and includes walkways, ball fields, hiking and biking trails, picnic areas, open space, a small lake, playgrounds, and sports courts.

The Fullerton Municipal Airport, adjacent to Interstate 5 and Highway 91, is owned and operated by the City of Fullerton and is the only general aviation airport in Orange County. Historically, military aircraft have used the airport for training, though details are not publicly available. There is no open space associated with the airport.

2.7.4 Tribal Resources

No existing tribal areas or reservations exist within city limits that are recognized by the federal government; however, the land is within ancestral territory of the Tongva/Kizh and Acjachemen people

Human habitation in the region now known as Fullerton dates back thousands of years, with archaeological evidence suggesting settlement as early as 5,000 BCE. Over time, more complex Indigenous cultures emerged, notably the Tongva (Gabrielino) and Acjachemen (Juaneño) peoples. These tribes established permanent villages throughout what is now Greater Los Angeles and northern Orange County, including the Fullerton area. The Tongva and Acjachemen developed sophisticated social structures, spiritual traditions, and trade networks that extended across Southern California. Their stewardship of the land shaped the ecological balance of the region and remains important to acknowledge within the context of open space.

3. GOALS AND POLICIES

The following pages present the goals and policies that guide the Open Space and Conservation Element. These goals and policies were developed based on a comprehensive review of existing conditions, including open space and natural resources, trails and open space access, habitat conservation, wildlife connectivity, the urban canopy, as well as extensive community engagement conducted through surveys, in-person outreach, and stakeholder input. Goals and policies also reflect coordination across City departments, alignment with applicable state requirements including SB 1425, AB 1889, and consideration of best practices in open space and conservation to ensure responsive and actionable guidance. Policies are identified by geography: Region/Subregion Level, City Level, District Level, or Project Level. In the event of any inconsistency between the Open Space and Conservation Element and other adopted City documents, the matter shall be reviewed and addressed in consultation with the City. Goals and policies related to parks and recreation are addressed in **Chapter 12: Parks and Recreation** of **'The Fullerton Community'** section of **'The Fullerton Plan'**.

GOAL 1:

Promote the responsible management of existing open spaces through strategies that balance public use with the preservation and enhancement of ecological health.

Policies

Specific statements that provide a directive or framework for City decision-making that directly contribute to the attainment of the goal.

Region/Subregion Level

P1.1 Open Space Management

Support projects, programs, and policies to coordinate with Orange County, existing regional park districts, private sector, and nonprofit institutions to manage or maintain regional open spaces.

P1.2 Land Trusts

Support projects, programs, and policies to encourage the establishment of land trusts to help preserve significant open space within the region.

City Level

P1.3 Long-Range Needs

Preserve areas of open space that are identified to be sufficient to meet the long-range needs of the City of Fullerton.

P1.4 Watershed Management

Continue management of open space watersheds to limit potential fire and erosion hazards. Coordinate with the Orange County Water District, Orange County Flood Control District, and neighboring jurisdictions to manage shared watershed resources in an ecologically consistent manner.

P1.5 High Quality Maintenance

Continue to support high-quality park and facility maintenance by focusing on key maintenance priorities, investing in maintenance staff, tools, and equipment, and adopting a design principle of low-maintenance and durable amenities to reduce long-term operational costs.

P1.6 Maintenance of Sensitive Areas

Support programs, policies, and regulations to require maintenance of environmentally-sensitive areas by qualified personnel and/or contractors.

P1.7 Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Support projects, programs, policies, and regulations to preserve the environmentally sensitive areas of public open spaces.

P1.8 Passive Open Space

Support projects, programs, policies, and regulations to encourage diverse, environmentally-sensitive, passive open spaces.

Project Level

P1.9 Environmental Impact of Support Facilities

Design necessary improvements and support facilities, such as fire roads, access roads, and parking areas, to minimize environmental impacts and preserve the visual character of open spaces.

P1.10 Open Space Amenities

Support additional park studies to evaluate existing amenities, such as restrooms, ADA accessibility, shaded seating, drinking fountains, and lighting, at Fullerton's open spaces. Continue to improve open space safety through measures such as improved lighting and enhanced security. Open spaces with sensitive habitats intended for passive recreation may not warrant the same level of amenities as urban parks, and amenity decisions should be guided by habitat sensitivity assessments.

GOAL 2:

Provide comprehensive and forward-thinking planning to guide the development, preservation, and stewardship of future open spaces.

Policies

Specific statements that provide a directive or framework for City decision-making that directly contribute to the attainment of the goal.

Region/Subregion Level

P2.1 Funding Strategy

Support development and implementation of a funding strategy to realize the City's vision for its open spaces.

P2.2 Priority Acquisition and Preservation

Pursue conservation and public access opportunities in Coyote Hills and other high-value ecological areas; work with landowners and land trusts to secure protection.

City Level

P2.3 New Open Space

Support projects, programs, policies, and regulations to create open space as funding and other opportunities become available.

District Level

P2.4 Neighborhood Greening

Engage with the community on neighborhood pocket parks, plazas, and community gardens; support increased green space in areas with minimal open space, in particular, within Districts 4 and 5.

GOAL 3:

Protect and enhance Fullerton’s natural systems by conserving sensitive habitats and waterways, restoring native vegetation and biodiversity, and preserving conservation areas.

Policies

Specific statements that provide a directive or framework for City decision-making that directly contribute to the attainment of the goal.

Region/Subregion Level

P3.1 Conservation of Sensitive Natural Resources

Support regional and subregional efforts to conserve habitat for sensitive species, plant communities and pollinators.

City Level

P3.2 Waterways Preservation

Support projects, programs, policies, and regulations to preserve the City’s public creeks, lakes, and waterways, including Fullerton Creek, Brea Creek, Coyote Creek and Carbon Creek, Bastanchury Greenbelt Creek, Laguna Lake, and the San Gabriel River Watershed. (See **Chapter 16: Water of ‘The Fullerton Community’** section of **‘The Fullerton Plan’** for related policies and actions.)

P3.3 Watershed Management

Support projects, programs, policies, and regulations to manage open space watersheds to limit potential fire and erosion hazards.

P3.4 Comprehensive Tree Management

Support projects, programs, policies and regulations to comprehensively plan for, manage, and promote trees throughout the City, particularly native trees.

P3.5 Wildlife Management

Support projects, programs, policies, and regulations to promote and encourage residents and visitors to respect the natural environment of wildlife inhabiting and/or migrating to Fullerton’s open spaces.

P3.6 Wildlife Habitat

Protect and enhance Fullerton’s existing habitats, including coastal sage scrub, chaparral communities, oak species, riparian corridors, and annual grasses and wildflowers, to support native biodiversity and ecological health.

P3.7 Habitat Protection

Promote the restoration and naturalization of degraded or underutilized areas through native vegetation planting and habitat enhancement, in partnership with organizations such as the Fullerton Arboretum and Botanical Garden, California State University Fullerton, and other volunteer groups.

P3.8 Support Biodiversity

Implement maintenance strategies that prioritize native vegetation and manage detrimental invasive plant and animal species in natural habitat areas. Promote vegetation that attracts desirable species and discourages those that pose nuisance or ecological risks.

P3.9 Low-Impact Access

Provide defined trails, interpretive signage, and seasonal closures to protect sensitive habitats when allowable.

P3.10 Invasive Control and Fire-Smart Stewardship

Implement ongoing invasive species removal and fuel-smart vegetation management to reduce wildfire risk while protecting habitat quality.

P3.11 Enhancement of Conservation Areas

Support projects, programs, policies, and regulations to preserve and enhance established conservation areas.

Project Level

P3.12 Mitigation of Impacts on Sensitive Areas

Support projects, programs, policies, and regulations to consider and mitigate project level impacts to sensitive habitat areas at the site and building design stages.

P3.13 Mitigation of Impacts on Waterways

Support projects, programs, policies, and regulations to consider and mitigate project level impacts to public waterways at the site and building design stages. (See **Chapter 16: Water** of 'The Fullerton Community' section of 'The Fullerton Plan' for related policies and actions.)

GOAL 4:

Increase accessibility and inclusivity of open space resources and enhance a connected trail system that links the community to these open spaces.

Policies

Specific statements that provide a directive or framework for City decision-making that directly contribute to the attainment of the goal.

Region/Subregion Level

P4.1 Access and Use of Open Space

Support projects, programs, and regulations to increase access to and use of open space resources while respecting the natural environment within Fullerton and to its neighboring cities.

City Level

P4.2 Accessibility for All

Support projects, programs, policies, and regulations to ensure that, when natural topography allows, public open spaces are accessible to people of all abilities.

P4.3 Trail Linkages to Open Space

Support projects, programs, policies, and regulations to promote recreational trails and the bikeway system to link open spaces to public areas and neighborhoods.

P4.4 Connected Trail System

Continually evaluate and maintain the City's network of paths and trails for hikers, walkers, runners, cyclists, mountain bikers, and equestrians.

P4.5 Navigating Open Spaces

Support projects, programs, policies, and regulations that promote easy access to and navigation within the City's open spaces and trails by installing wayfinding signage and creating plans for multi-modal access when allowable. Explore digital wayfinding opportunities to help increase access to and awareness of open space in the City.

P4.6 Accessible and Inclusive

Promote accessibility and inclusivity in park facilities and programs through universal design and diverse, community-responsive activities.

P4.7 Programming

Support programs and services that bring residents together, serve all age groups, and are responsive to community needs and desires.

P4.8 Trail Studies

Support additional trail studies to assess existing amenities, including trailhead retrofits, ADA-compliant parking, accessible restrooms, shade opportunities, trail improvements, wayfinding, and benches.

P4.9 Safe Shared Use

Promote context-specific e-bike speed limits and etiquette guidelines on multi-use paths to reduce conflicts and ensure safe shared use.

P4.10 Safety Improvements

Continue enhancing sidewalks, crossings, and bike lanes that lead to parks and trails to ensure safer access to open spaces.

District Level

P4.11 Extended Network

Support research and development of an improved trail network in Districts 4 and 5 to enhance connectivity with existing open spaces.

Project Level

P4.12 Rail-to-Trail Strategy:

Transform abandoned or underutilized rail corridors into linear parks and trail spurs to close gaps in the network, as allowable and where permitted by land use regulations.

GOAL 5:

Strengthen Fullerton's open spaces to support native biodiversity, enhance climate resilience, and maintain ecological function through initiatives such as rewilding, habitat restoration, and nature-based solutions.

Policies

Specific statements that provide a directive or framework for City decision-making that directly contribute to the attainment of the goal.

Region/Subregion Level

P5.1 Connectivity Partnerships

Coordinate with Orange County and other regional partners to support connectivity and wildlife access improvements region-wide. Explore partnership opportunities for business sponsorship and collaboration with nonprofits such as the California Native Plant Society and local educational institutions.

P5.2 Rewilding

Implement urban rewilding projects to reintroduce natural processes, restore natural ecosystems, and promote biodiversity.

City Level

P5.3 Habitat Linkages

Prioritize rewilding in areas that enhance or establish habitat linkages and wildlife corridors, as identified in Essential Habitat Connectivity and Natural Areas designated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

P5.4 Wildlife Movement Design

Incorporate wildlife-friendly infrastructure such as vegetated buffers, restored corridors, green infrastructure, and suitable vegetation along with features like culverts and buffer zones to create pathways for wildlife movement and foster a more resilient, biodiverse city.

P5.5 Movement Mitigation

Assess and mitigate barriers to wildlife movement caused by roads, levees, and urban development when allowable and where permitted by land use regulations.

P5.6 Wildlife Corridors

Identify, protect, and enhance wildlife and recreational corridors connecting Coyote Hills, Laguna Lake, Brea Dam, Craig Regional Park, and Fullerton Arboretum and Botanical Garden.

P5.7 Community Stewardship

Support volunteer days in collaboration with community members, nonprofits, and schools. Promote inclusive participation in habitat restoration through stewardship programs, youth engagement initiatives, and interpretive signage in rewilded open spaces. Distribute how-to collateral and promote demonstration sites to help community members implement native landscaping on their own properties.

P5.8 Resilient Landscaping

Prioritize the use of native, drought-tolerant, and climate-resilient plants in Fullerton's parks and landscaped open spaces and private properties, to enhance habitat value, conserve water, and support pollinator species.

P5.9 Ecologically Beneficial Features.

Incorporate ecologically beneficial elements such as pollinator gardens, wildflower meadows, bioswales, and native plant corridors, into public parks, street medians, and along trail networks. Encourage these ecologically beneficial elements for private properties as well.

District Level

P5.10 Urban Canopy

Enhance canopy and shade tree coverage along walking routes, school frontages, bus stops, and park perimeters to reduce heat exposure and strengthen wildlife connectivity. Prioritize planting in areas with low canopy coverage, particularly in Districts 4 and 5, to deliver co-benefits for both the community and local wildlife. Additionally, consider other urban heat island mitigation strategies such as green roofs, light-colored building and pavement surfaces, and permeable pavement.

GOAL 6:

Ensure Fullerton's infrastructure network is adaptively managed to strengthen resilience against climate change impacts, including extreme heat, increased flood risk, and other hazards.

Policies

Specific statements that provide a directive or framework for City decision-making that directly contribute to the attainment of the goal.

Region/Subregion Level

P6.1 Tree City Designation

Maintain Fullerton's Tree City USA designation by implementing urban forest management practices that promote tree health, increase canopy coverage, enhance climate resilience, and engage the community in stewardship efforts.

City Level

P6.2 Resilient Design

Prioritize the preservation and restoration of open spaces and natural areas in Fullerton that provide multi-benefit climate services such as carbon sequestration, heat reduction, and habitat connectivity while also reducing wildfire risk through vegetation best practices. Focus efforts particularly in underserved areas to enhance community resilience and protect critical ecosystems.

P6.3 Green Streets

Promote the development of green streets that integrate native vegetation, permeable surfaces, and stormwater management features to enhance urban habitat, improve water quality, and reduce runoff.

P6.4 Green Infrastructure

Promote the integration of rooftop gardens, rooftop and elevated parks, vertical greenery, and other green infrastructure solutions to enhance urban biodiversity, improve air quality, manage stormwater, and reduce energy consumption, while ensuring compliance with the City's landscaping and irrigation standards. Additionally, promote education, awareness, and recognition programs to encourage distributed green infrastructure participation by residents and businesses.

P6.5 Cooling Corridors

Prioritize the use of shade trees, reflective or sustainable materials, and shade structures along pedestrian priority corridors, trails, schools, bus stops, senior centers, and pathways to open spaces. Continue providing accessible information on heat-related concerns and the locations of cooling centers throughout the city.

P6.6 Natural Water Management Infrastructure

Promote bioswales, rain gardens (planted areas that collect rainwater runoff), permeable pavements, and detention features in parks, streets, and parking lots per the Fullerton's Water Utility's Water Conservation Ordinance. Incorporate green infrastructure and low-impact development that mimic natural hydrology, reduce impervious surface runoff, and support groundwater recharge as explicit watershed policy tools.

P6.7 Landscaping and Irrigation

Enhance Fullerton's landscaping and irrigation requirements to incorporate drought-tolerant native plants, promoting water conservation, climate resilience, and habitat restoration.

P6.8 Air Quality Mitigation

Enhance air quality mitigation strategies by recommending vegetative buffers, advanced filtration systems, and site design measures to reduce exposure near major transportation corridors, the 'Fullerton Transportation Center, and industrial facilities throughout the city.

P6.9 Greening Air Improvements

Support and implement 'Fullerton's Community Forestry Ordinance' and 'Community Forest Management Plan' to improve air quality and reduce urban heat through targeted tree canopy expansion and the installation of vegetated buffers in high-exposure areas.

P6.10 Complete Streets

Encourage smart growth and complete streets design principles, when allowable and where permitted by land use regulations, which integrate air quality protection measures, such as shade trees and green infrastructure.

P6.11 VMT Reduction

Prioritize transportation and mobility improvements in Fullerton that reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas emissions by expanding pedestrian-friendly corridors, bicycle networks, and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure. Emphasize connectivity near public transit, schools, and industrial facilities, and underserved neighborhoods to promote equitable and sustainable mobility options.

GOAL 7:

Strengthen community participation in open space and conservation decisions by actively engaging residents, regional partners, and organizations in the protection and enhancement of local natural resources.

Policies

Specific statements that provide a directive or framework for City decision-making that directly contribute to the attainment of the goal.

Region/Subregion Level

P7.1 Conservation Partnerships

Collaborate with regional agencies, nonprofit organizations, and academic institutions to advance conservation and resilience goals.

City Level

P7.2 Plan and Engage Proactively

Promote long-term open space and conservation success through regular planning, transparent reporting, and ongoing community engagement.

P7.3 Public Awareness

Enhance public awareness of urban wildlife, habitat conservation, and sustainable coexistence through targeted education and outreach initiatives.

P7.4 Community Stewardship

Encourage community participation in habitat restoration, monitoring, and stewardship activities.

P7.5 Partnership Model

Support collaboration among local nonprofits, community groups, California State University, Fullerton, public schools in Fullerton, etc. to advance open space and engagement initiatives.

P7.6 Transparent Dashboards

Continue to ensure transparency by regularly sharing updates with the community on open space maintenance, safety, and environmental health data as available. Provide visible results from community engagement efforts.

P7.7 Community-Led Monitoring

Provide multilingual materials and community engagement in underserved areas; develop engagement programs for youth and seniors; and host workshops across Fullerton and park-adjacent venues for future open space programming initiatives.

