RESOLUTION NO. 2026-XXX

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FULLERTON, CALIFORNIA, APPROVING A GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT TO ADOPT AN UPDATED OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT AS THE FULLERTON PLAN APPENDIX M AND TO REPLACE CHAPTER 19 IN ITS ENTIRETY

WHEREAS, California Government Code Section 65302(e) requires each city adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan that includes an open space element for open space land preservation.

WHEREAS, the City of Fullerton adopted The Fullerton Plan on May 1, 2012, which serves as the City General Plan pursuant to state law, including an Open Space and Conservation Element as Chapter 19.

WHEREAS, the current Open Space and Conservation Element needs updating to comply with recent State legislation, including Senate Bill (SB) 1425, which requires cities to address equitable access, climate resilience and rewilding opportunities and Assembly Bill (AB) 1889, which requires wildlife connectivity analysis.

WHEREAS, the City initiated a comprehensive Element update in September 2025.

WHEREAS, staff developed the updated Open Space and Conservation Element through a comprehensive planning process including existing conditions review and natural resources, trails, habitat conservation wildlife connectivity and the urban tree canopy analysis as well as extensive community engagement conducted through surveys, in-person outreach and stakeholder input.

WHEREAS, the update process included an online survey conducted from October 27 to November 30, 2025 garnering 642 responses and in-person outreach at the OktoBOOfest event on October 30, 2025 to engage residents directly.

WHEREAS, the City released the Draft Open Space and Conservation Element for a public review period beginning February 20, 2026 through March 20, 2026, providing the community an opportunity to review and submit written comments on the proposed update.

WHEREAS, the Draft Open Space and Conservation Element reflects coordination across City departments, aligns with applicable state requirements including SB 1425 and AB 1889 and considers best practices in open space and conservation planning.

WHEREAS, staff prepared the Draft Open Space and Conservation Element prepared in coordination with the first City Environmental Justice Element, required by Senate Bill 1000.

WHEREAS, the updated Open Space and Conservation Element is internally consistent with all other elements of The Fullerton Plan, including the Land Use, Conservation, Safety and Environmental Justice Elements.

WHEREAS, the updated Open Space and Conservation Element organizes around three main sections

Section 1 (Introduction) provides the Element purpose and background, identifies applicable statutory requirements including California Government Code Section 65302(e), Senate Bill 1425 and Assembly Bill 1889, describes the coordinated planning process undertaken with the first City Environmental Justice Element, summarizes community engagement activities including the citywide online survey and in-person outreach and establishes the Element's relationship to other City documents including The Fullerton Plan, the Community Forest Management Plan and the Emergency Operations Plan.

Section 2 (Existing Conditions) provides a comprehensive citywide assessment of open space inventory, access and recreational trails, habitat conservation, vegetation profiles, wildlife connectivity and rewilding opportunities, urban tree canopy coverage, climate vulnerability and resilience and supporting data on special management areas, urban heat islands, military support and tribal resources.

Section 3 (Goals and Policies) sets forth seven goals and their implementing policies that guide the City open space and conservation decision-making.

WHEREAS, the proposed Goals and Policies are organized under seven key goals that address open space management, planning for future open space, habitat conservation, accessibility and inclusivity, ecological function and climate resilience, green infrastructure and community stewardship.

WHEREAS, Goal 1 (Open Space Management) directs the City to ensure effective stewardship and long-term maintenance of Fullerton's open space lands, addressing community-identified priorities such as safety, upkeep, and usability of parks and natural areas, with particular attention to equitable service levels across all districts.

WHEREAS, Goal 2 (Planning for Future Open Space) directs the City to expand and strategically plan for new open space opportunities throughout Fullerton, with policies targeting identified gaps in park and open space access, particularly in Districts 3, 4, and 5, in alignment with the City's new Environmental Justice Element.

WHEREAS, Goal 3 (Habitat Conservation) directs the City to protect and preserve Fullerton's natural habitats and biological resources, supported by an Essential Habitat Connectivity map and analysis and policies P5.1 through P5.7, which establish a clear framework to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts on wildlife movement, consistent with Assembly Bill 1889requirements.

WHEREAS, Goal 4 (Accessibility and Inclusivity) directs the City to promote equitable access to open space and recreational resources for all Fullerton residents, addressing Senate Bill 1425 equity mandates and ensuring open space planning prioritizes historically underserved communities needs throughout the city.

WHEREAS, Goal 5 (Ecological Function and Climate Resilience) directs the City to strengthen the ecological health of open spaces and build resilience to climate-related hazards including wildfire, flooding and urban heat, incorporating climate vulnerability assessments and identifying specific opportunities for habitat restoration and rewilding, coordinated with the Safety Element.

WHEREAS, Goal 6 (Green Infrastructure) directs the City to integrate green infrastructure systems—including the urban tree canopy, stormwater management features and naturalized corridors—into the built environment, working in tandem with climate resilience efforts to provide multiple environmental and community co-benefits across the urban landscape.

WHEREAS, Goal 7 (Community Stewardship) directs the City to foster community engagement, education and partnerships in the care and enhancement of Fullerton open spaces, building upon the community-driven foundation of the element update process, which included 642 survey responses and direct outreach to over 100 residents, to establish sustained stewardship programs.

WHEREAS, pursuant to SB 18, the City notified 34 California Native American tribe representatives via certified mail regarding the proposed General Plan Amendment and received responses consistent with policy-level review.

WHEREAS, the updated Open Space and Conservation Element organizes around three main sections:

Section 1 (Introduction) provides the Element purpose and background, identifies applicable statutory requirements including California Government Code Section 65302(e), Senate Bill 1425 and Assembly Bill 1889, describes the coordinated planning process undertaken with the first City Environmental Justice Element, summarizes community engagement activities including the citywide online survey and in-person outreach and establishes the Element relationship to other City documents including The Fullerton Plan, the Community Forest Management Plan and the Emergency Operations Plan.

Section 2 (Existing Conditions) comprehensively assesses citywide open space inventory, access and recreational trails, habitat conservation, vegetation profiles, wildlife connectivity and rewilding opportunities, urban tree canopy coverage, climate vulnerability and resilience and supporting data on special management areas, urban heat islands, military support and tribal resources.

Section 3 (Goals and Policies) sets forth the seven goals and implementing policies that guide the City open space and conservation decision-making.

WHEREAS, The City notified 34 California Native American tribes via certified mail pursuant to SB 18 regarding the proposed General Plan Amendment and received responses consistent with policy-level review.

WHEREAS, Notice of the Planning Commission public hearing published in the Fullerton News Tribune on April 2, 2026 in accordance with all applicable legal requirements.

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission of the City of Fullerton, in compliance with the noticing requirements of FMC Chapter 15.76, held a duly noticed public hearing on April 22, 2026 to consider all evidence presented, both written and oral, including the staff report, the Draft Open Space and Conservation Element dated April 2026 and all public testimony and written comments submitted in connection therewith.

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission unanimously adopted Resolution No. PC-2026-06 on April 22, 2026 recommending City Council approve the General Plan Amendment to adopt Appendix M: Open Space and Conservation Element (April 2026) and replace Chapter 19 of The Fullerton Plan in its entirety.

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Fullerton, in compliance with the noticing requirements of FMC Chapter 15.76, held a duly noticed public hearing on June 16, 2026 to consider all evidence presented, both written and oral.

WHEREAS, FMC Sections 15.72.040 and 15.72.050 authorize City Council to conduct a public hearing to consider proposed amendments to The Fullerton Plan and to approve, modify or deny such amendments upon making the required findings.

WHEREAS, a General Plan Element adoption is a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Staff determined the Open Space and Conservation exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the Common Sense Exemption, as it is a policy document that does not authorize direct physical changes to the environment, significant environmental impacts are not anticipated from its adoption and future projects implemented under its framework will undergo their own project-level CEQA review.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FULLERTON RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

The City Council hereby approves the General Plan Amendment based on the following findings:

1. Finding 1: The Draft Open Space and Conservation Element has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of California Government Code Section 65302(e) and all other applicable provisions of state law.

Fact 1: The Draft Open Space and Conservation Element constitutes a permissible amendment to The Fullerton Plan pursuant to Government Code Section 65353 and FMC Section 15.24.130.

Fact 2: SB 1425 (Open Space and Equity): The Element addresses equitable access through policies under Goals 1, 2, and 4 that target community-identified park and open space gaps, particularly in Districts 3, 4, and 5, aligning with the new Environmental Justice Element. For climate resilience, Goals 5 and 6 integrate climate vulnerability assessments (fire, flood, urban heat) with conservation policies, creating a comprehensive framework coordinated with the Safety Element. Regarding rewilding opportunities, Goal 5, supported by the Existing Conditions analysis (Section 2.5), identifies specific opportunities for habitat restoration and connectivity, aligning with the Land Use Element.

Fact 3: AB 1889 (Wildlife Connectivity): The "Essential Habitat Connectivity" map and analysis (Section 2.5) directly address this mandate. Policies P5.1 through P5.7 provide a clear framework to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts on wildlife movement.

2. Finding 2: The Draft Open Space and Conservation Element is internally consistent with all other elements of The Fullerton Plan.

Fact: The City Council has reviewed the Draft Open Space and Conservation Element alongside the Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Safety, Noise, and Environmental Justice Elements of The Fullerton Plan. The updated Element contains no conflicts with existing goals, policies, or implementation measures and has been revised where necessary to ensure internal consistency as required by Government Code Section 65300.5.

3. Finding 3: The Draft Open Space and Conservation Element reflects the community's vision for open space management, habitat conservation, climate resilience, accessibility, and equitable access to open space resources.

Fact: The update process included an online survey conducted from October 27 to November 30, 2025, which garnered 642 responses, as well as in-person outreach at the OktoBOOfest event on October 30, 2025, engaging over 100 residents directly. Community feedback directly informed the seven goal areas and specific policies addressing equitable access, maintenance, safety, and conservation priorities.

4. Finding 4: The public engagement process conducted in connection with the preparation of the Draft Open Space and Conservation Element was consistent with the City's community engagement standards.

Fact: In addition to the survey and in-person outreach described above, the Draft Element was released for a 30-day public review period beginning February 20,

2026. Notice was published in the Fullerton News Tribune. A duly noticed public hearing was held before the Planning Commission on April 22, 2026, and before the City Council on June 16, 2026, at which time all evidence, public testimony, and written comments submitted in connection therewith were considered.

The City Council finds that approval of the General Plan Amendment to adopt the updated Open Space and Conservation Element is exempt from CEQA review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), Common Sense Exemption, based on the following:

5. Finding 5: The Common Sense Exemption applies to projects where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment.

   Fact: The Open Space and Conservation Element is a policy-level document that does not authorize any direct physical changes to the environment, does not approve any new development or construction, and does not modify land use designations or zoning classifications. The document provides goals, policies, and an implementation framework to guide future decision-making. Any future projects implemented under the framework will undergo their own independent project-level CEQA review prior to approval. Because the adoption of this Element is a policy action with no direct physical effect on the environment, it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that adoption of the Element will have significant effect on the environment.

THEREFORE, the City Council does hereby APPROVE said General Plan Amendment (LRP-2026-0004), subject to the following:

1. The previous recitals are true and correct and are incorporated herein as if fully set forth.

2. The City Council hereby approves the General Plan Amendment to The Fullerton Plan by adopting Appendix M: Open Space and Conservation Element (June 2026), attached hereto as Exhibit A and incorporated herein by this reference.

3. Chapter 19 (Open Space and Conservation Element) of The Fullerton Plan, as adopted on May 1, 2012, is hereby amended and replaced in its entirety by the updated Open Space and Conservation Element set forth in Appendix M (June 2026).

4. The Community and Economic Development Director, or designee, is hereby authorized to make minor, non-substantive edits and formatting corrections to Appendix M prior to publication, consistent with the direction provided by the City Council at the public hearing, without the requirement to return to the City Council for approval of such changes.

5. The City Clerk is directed to file a Notice of Exemption with the Orange County Clerk-Recorder within five working days of this action, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15062.

6. The updated Open Space and Conservation Element will be filed with the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation following adoption, consistent with Government Code Section 65357.

7. The General Plan website maintained by the Community and Economic Development Department shall be updated to list the updated Open Space and Conservation Element (2026) as Appendix M of The Fullerton Plan.

ADOPTED BY THE FULLERTON CITY COUNCIL ON JUNE 16, 2026

_____
Fred Jung
Mayor

ATTEST:

_____
Lucinda Williams, MMC
City Clerk

_____
Date

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Appendix M: Draft Open Space and Conservation Element (June 2026)