



# Open Space and Conservation Element (OSE) Update

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City Council  
June 16, 2026



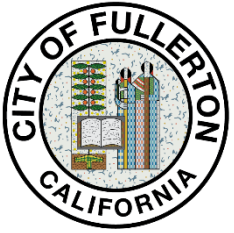
# Overview and Purpose

- The City's Planning division is tasked with updating Fullerton's Open Space and Conservation Element to comply with CA state requirements based on Senate Bill 1425 (SB 1425), which was signed into law in 2022 with a compliance deadline of January 1, 2026.
- The Open Space and Conservation Element is a **core** component of the city's General Plan, which is the foundational, long-range policy document guiding growth and land use. Its adoption is required to comply with state law.
- The update must specifically address three areas by correlating with other General Plan elements:
  - **Equitable Access:** Ensuring all residents have access to open space, correlated with the Environmental Justice Element.
  - **Climate Resilience:** Enhancing the role of open space in climate adaptation, correlated with the Safety Element.
  - **Rewilding Opportunities:** Preserving and enhancing an integrated network of open space for habitat and other benefits, correlated with the Land Use Element.



# Key Items For Consideration of Adoption

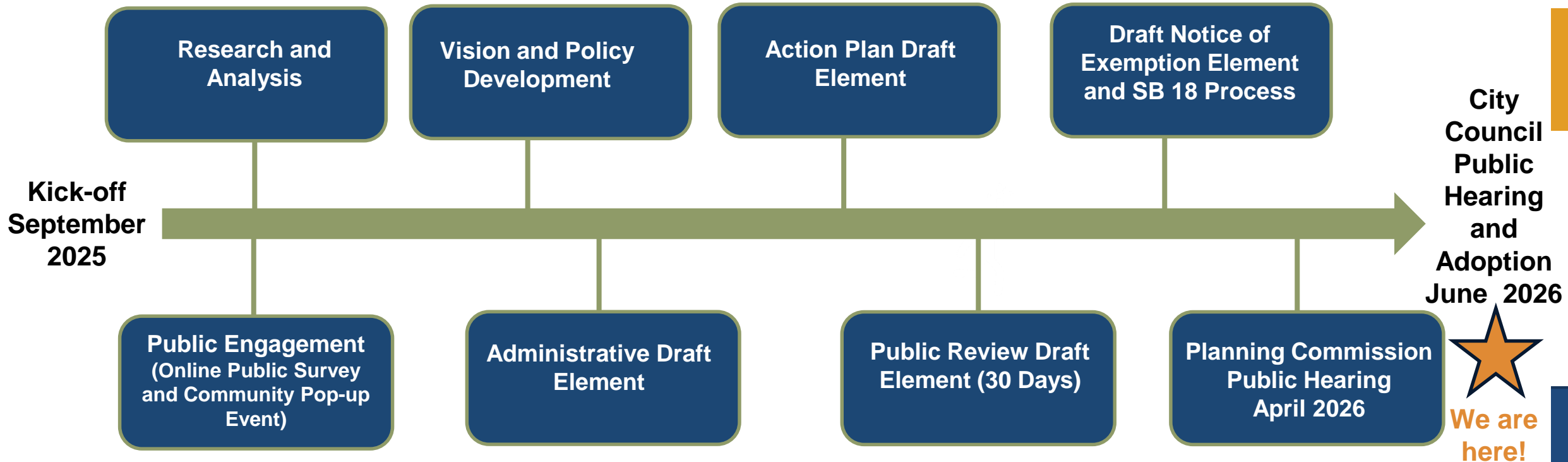
- The Open Space and Conservation Element Itself
  - Replaces Chapter 19 : Open Space and Natural Resources, as Appendix M
  - Additional: Appendix M Supplement - Online Public Survey Responses
- Integration of Public Comments (five received) into the Element and Goals and Actions as applicable
- Adoption requires a General Plan Amendment.
- Primarily a Policy Integration. *No direct land use changes and zoning code modification*
- The Planning Commission approved and recommended the Element for City Council approval by a 5-0 vote, adopting Resolution No. PC-2026-06 on April 22, 2026.
- Exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) Common Sense Exemption. Draft Notice of Exemption prepared.



# Major Milestones and Deliverables

**Deliverable**

**Open Space and Conservation Element Update (OSE)**





# Open Space Element (OSE) Structure

## Appendix M – Open Space and Conservation Element

### Introduction

Purpose and Background  
Statutory Requirement  
Planning Process  
Relationship to Other Documents

### Existing Conditions

Open Space Inventory  
West Coyote Hills  
Access to Open Space  
Habitat Conservation  
Wildlife Connectivity and  
Rewilding Opportunities  
Climate Vulnerability and Resilience

### Goals and Policies

Goal 1: Balance public use with ecological health.  
Goal 2: Fund and acquire future open spaces; green underserved areas.  
Goal 3: Protect habitats, waterways, and native plants.  
Goal 4: Expand accessible trails and parks.  
Goal 5: Boost climate resilience and wildlife corridors.  
Goal 6: Add green infrastructure and tree canopy in Districts 4 and 5.  
Goal 7: Ensure community participation and multilingual outreach.

### Survey Supplement Appendix M Supplement

Online Public Survey  
Responses

### Action Plans Internal City Document

130+ action items, not to file with OSE



# Community Engagement Summary

## ONLINE SURVEY



642

**Total Survey Participants**

5

**Survey Categories**  
*Environmental Justice, Open Space and Conservation, Access, Re-wilding, and Climate Resilience*

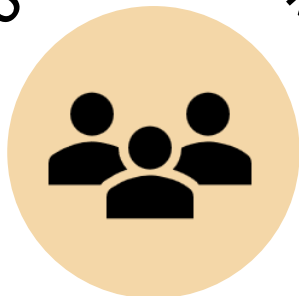
35

**Days Live for Responses**  
*October 27– November 30, 2025*

5

**Media Channels**  
*City Website, City Banner, City Instagram, Email E-Blast, and Digital Display Boards*

## OUTREACH EVENT



150+

**In Person Visitors**  
*OktoBOOfest in Fullerton on October 30, 2025*

4

**Hours Connecting**  
*In person time connecting with the Community*

2

**Activity Boards**  
*Receiving 85 responses*

100+

**Flyers Provided**  
*To build awareness on the Process*



# Community Engagement Processes

## City's dedicated webpage



### Help Shape Fullerton's Future – Take the Open Space & Environmental Justice Survey!

Your feedback will directly guide the goals and policies in Fullerton's Open Space and Environmental Justice Elements. By sharing your thoughts, you'll help create plans that reflect what matters most to our community – cleaner air, safer parks, and healthier neighborhoods.

The City of Fullerton is updating its **Open Space Element** and creating its **first-ever Environmental Justice Element** within the General Plan to meet new state requirements. These updates will help ensure everyone in our city has access to healthy, safe, and vibrant spaces.

#### What's changing:

- **New Environmental Justice Element (Senate Bill 1000):** Cities must now include environmental justice in their plans -- focusing on reducing health risks, improving community participation, and prioritizing programs in areas that need them most.
- **Open Space Element Update (Senate Bill 1425):** Updates to parks and green space policies to reflect climate change, access, and future sustainability goals.

The City has prepared an update to its **Open Space Element** as part of the **General Plan** and has now released the **Element for Public Review!**

Kindly Provide any thoughts or questions on the **Public Review Draft** By **March 20, 2026**. **Public**

## Banners



## Social Media Outreach



## Email E-blast

City of Fullerton



## Public Review of Draft Open Space and Conservation Element

The City of Fullerton is updating its Open Space and Conservation Element within the General Plan. Just released is the Draft Open Space and Conservation Element for your review and comments. Your voice matters as the City seeks your input to continue to enhance the overall quality of life in Fullerton. Let's build a greener and healthier Fullerton together.

### Public Review of Draft Open Space and Conservation Element

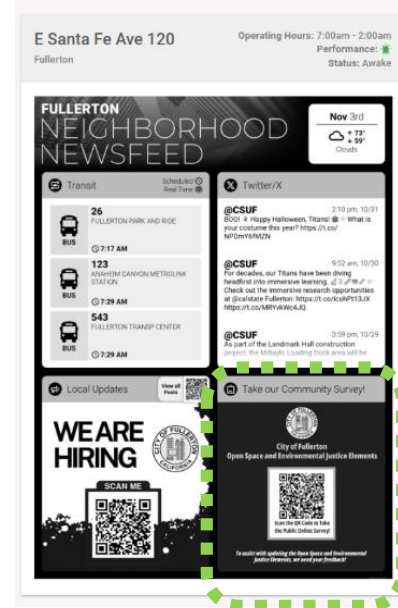
This important update will shape how we prioritize:

- Conservation and utilization of natural resources
- Safer and well-maintained parks
- Connecting trails and open spaces
- Healthier neighborhoods for all

Please send your comments by **March 20, 2026** to:

City of Fullerton  
Community & Economic Development  
Senior Planner, Yan Gao, [yan.gao@cityoffullerton.com](mailto:yan.gao@cityoffullerton.com)

## Soofa digital display boards at the transit center





# Community Engagement Themes

## Open Space

- **Strong use of open spaces:** Over 85% of respondents noted that there are open spaces in Fullerton that they visit
  - Most respondents visit parks and trails regularly; popular locations include Hillcrest Park, Laguna Lake, Craig Regional Park, and Coyote Hills among others
- **Barriers to access:** Common issues include time constraints, lack of amenities (restrooms, shade, seating), and safety concerns
  - Cost and transportation to the park were not commonly identified as barriers to access
- **Desired improvements:**
  - Respondents want cleaner and more accessible restrooms, better parking, more shaded seating and picnic areas, improved maintenance, restrictions on e-bikes, and enhanced safety measures



# Community Engagement Themes

## Re-Wilding and Outreach Awareness

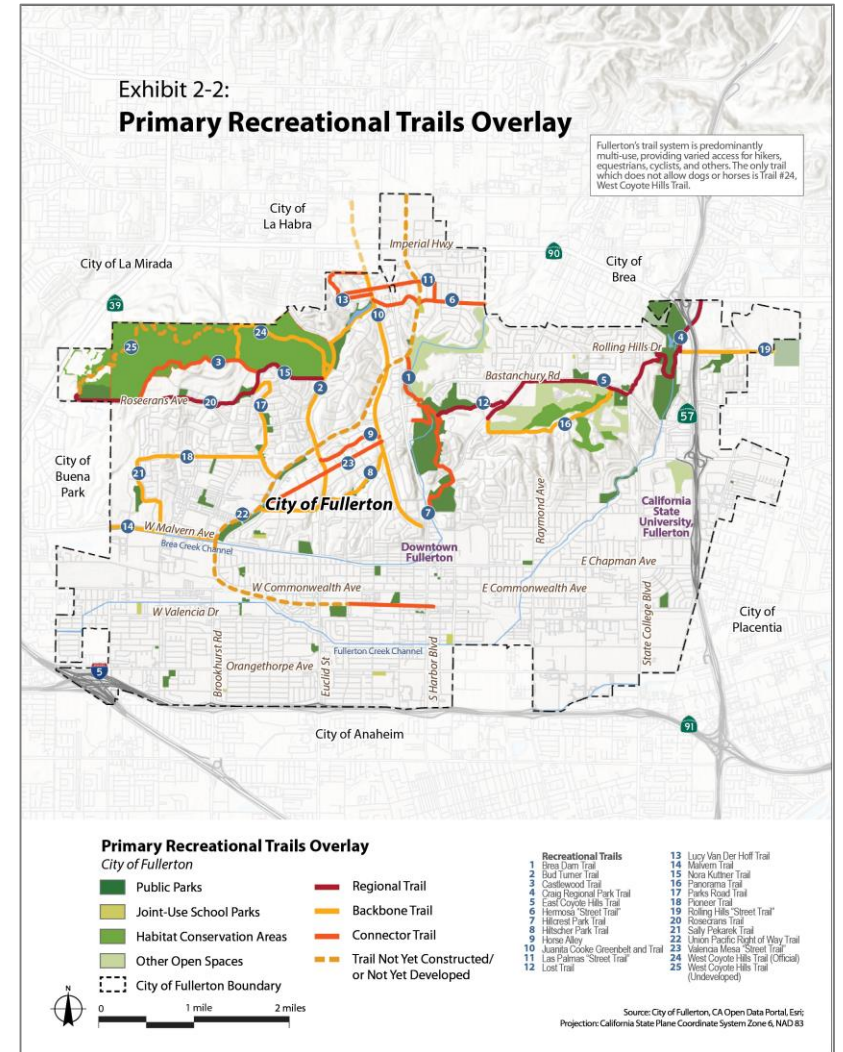
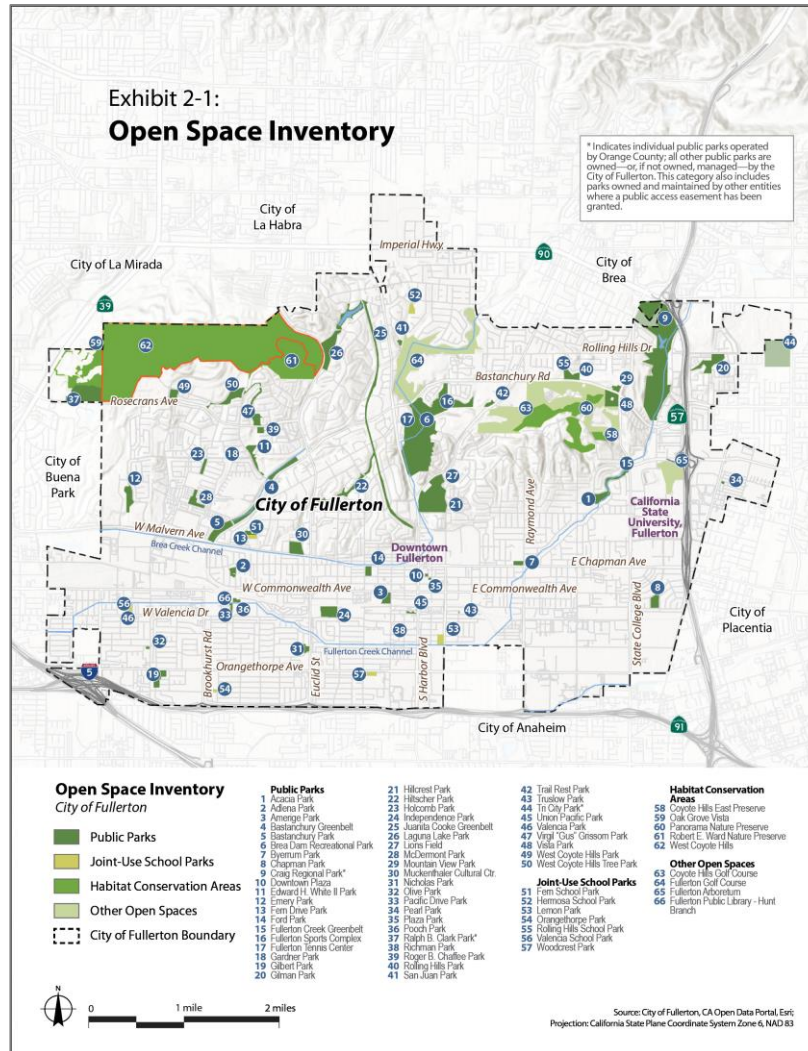
- **Wildlife presence:** Over 78% of respondents reported that they are aware of wildlife areas in Fullerton
  - Residents frequently observe wildlife in the Coyote Hills, Laguna Lake, and the various parks and trail systems
- **Adaptation strategies:**
  - The most frequently suggested actions were planting more native trees and vegetation, cultivating tree canopy for shade, and protecting and restoring native habitats
- **Preservation priorities:** Over 77% of respondents identified areas to preserve, enhance, or expand
  - Coyote Hills was the most common response, along with various open space areas and trails in Fullerton
- **Preferred outreach methods:** Respondents most often suggested partnerships with local nonprofits and schools, community workshops and forums, and online surveys, along with youth/senior engagement programs and public reporting on environmental health data
- **Continued involvement:** About 58% of respondents provided an email address to be informed on long-range planning updates



# Open Space and Conservation Maps

## Open Space and Recreational Trails Inventory Maps

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



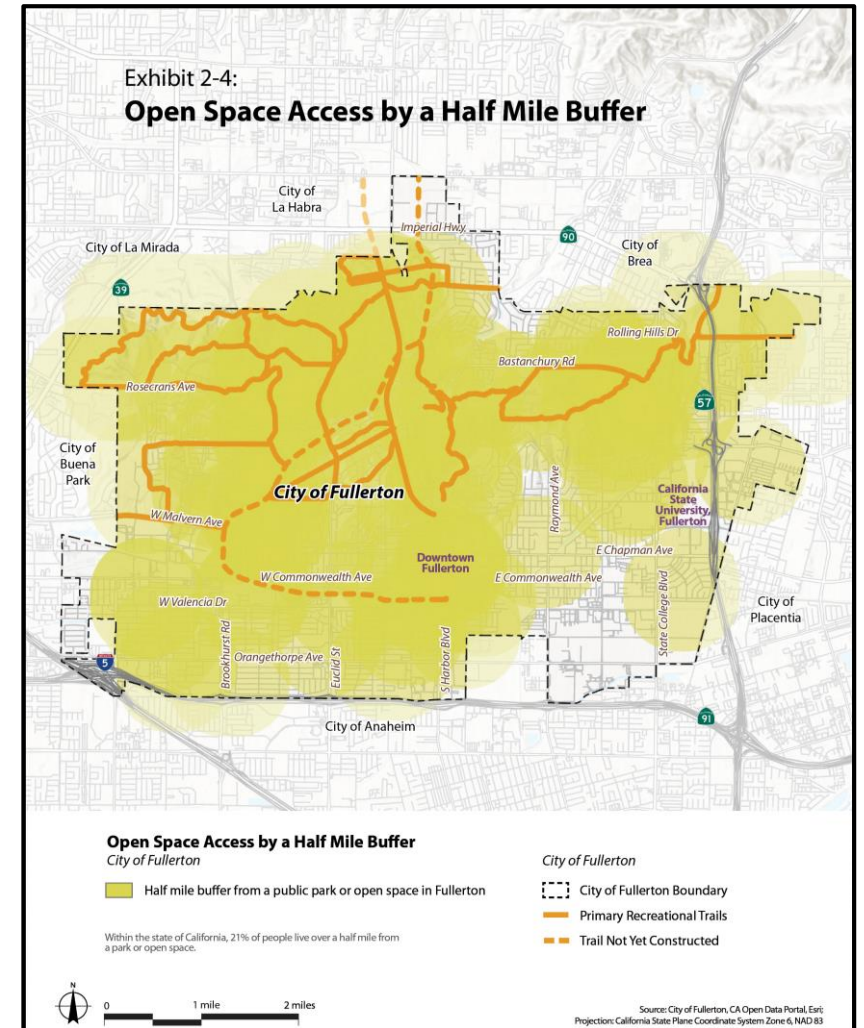
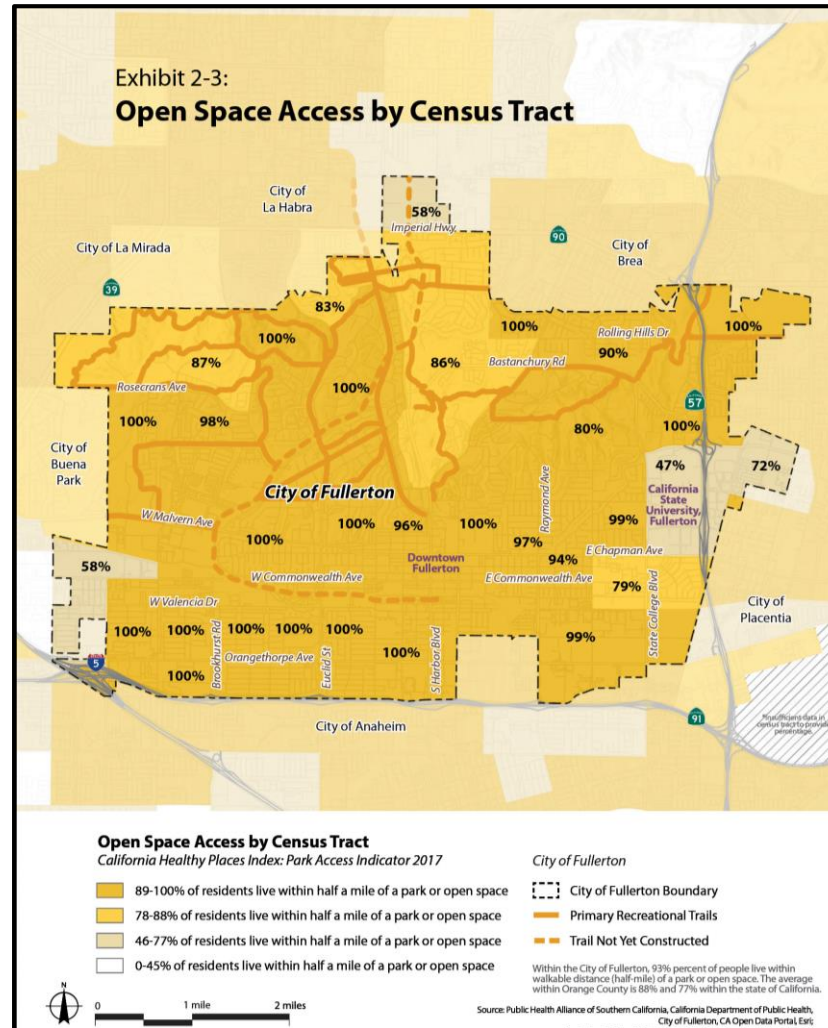
Note: Recreation is mapped in this Element but remains a separate section (The Fullerton Community) within Fullerton's General Plan



# Open Space and Conservation Maps

## Open Space Access by Census Tract and by a Half Mile Buffer

- As a city, Fullerton ranks healthier than **82.4%** of other California cities and towns in terms of park access. However, several census tracts have below average access ratings.
- Several areas of the city do not have access to a public park or open space within a half mile from their house.

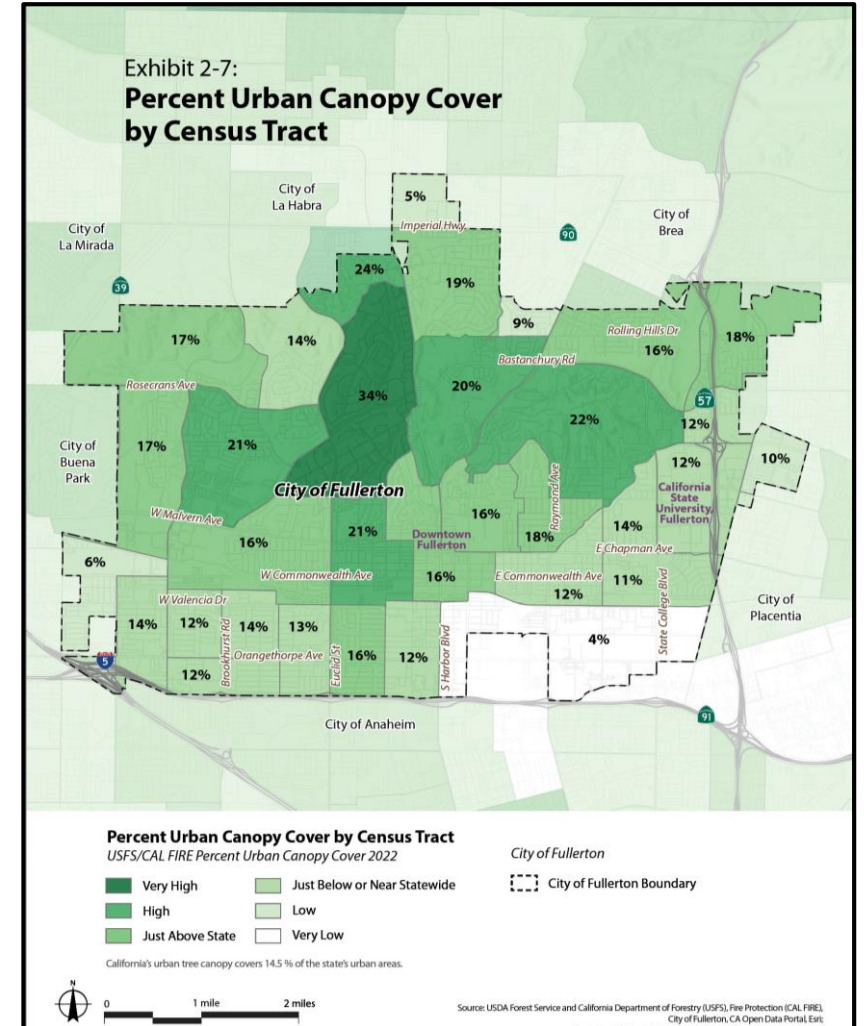
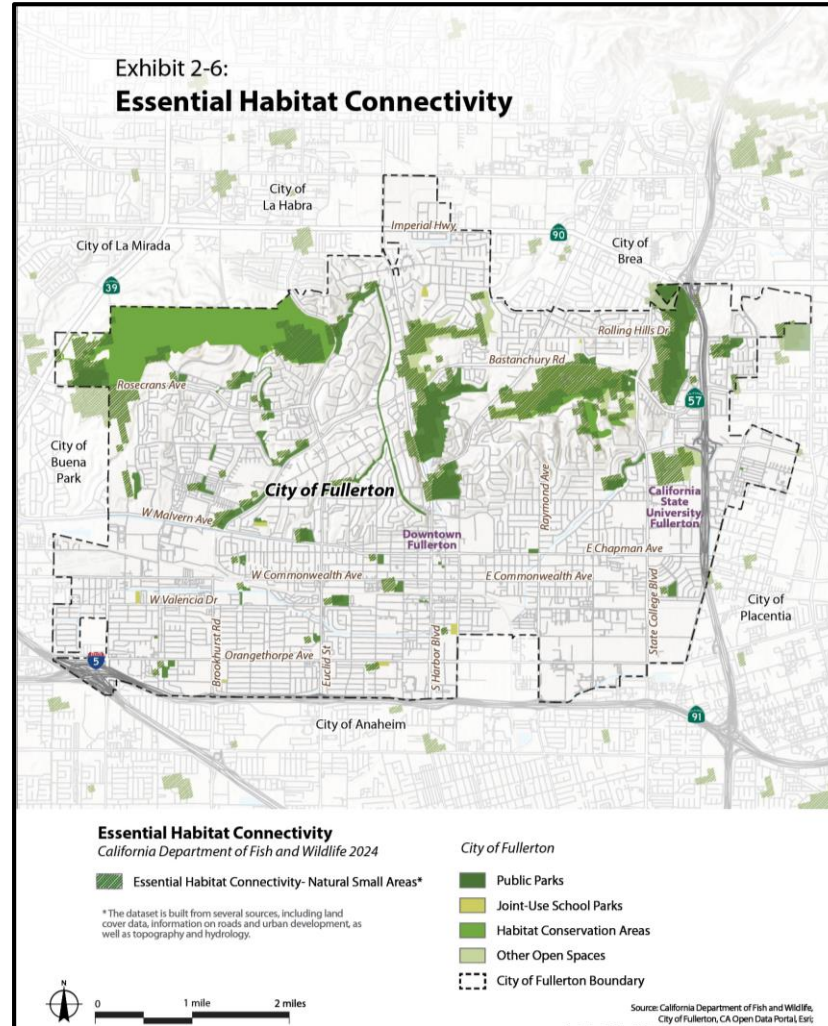




# Open Space and Conservation Maps

## Habitat Connectivity Opportunities and Existing Canopy Cover

- Extensive urban development limits wildlife corridors and habitat linkages in Fullerton; however, re-wilding at a smaller scale, such as enhancing habitats, planting vegetation, and implementing wildlife-friendly infrastructure can create pathways for wildlife movement.
- In California, urban tree canopy covers **14.5%** of the state's urban areas; a few census tracts in Fullerton are below that average.





# Open Space and Conservation

## Summary of Existing Conditions

- **Rewilding:** The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) commissioned the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project to illustrate the network of connected wildlands and strategies to support California's diverse natural communities
  - Habitat connectivity areas align with existing open space in Fullerton
- **Access to Open Space:** Most census tracts have access to open space; however, five tracts have been identified where 50% or fewer residents live within a walkable distance (half-mile) of a park or open space



# Goals and Policies

## Final Step: Draft Updated Goals

### 1. Responsible Management

Promote responsible management of existing open spaces, balancing public use with ecological health.

### 2. Future Open Spaces

Guide the development, preservation, and stewardship of future open spaces.

### 3. Natural Systems

Conserve sensitive habitats and waterways, restore native vegetation and biodiversity.

### 4. Accessibility & Trails

Increase accessibility and inclusivity of open space resources and enhance a connected trail system.

### 5. Rewilding & Biodiversity

Support native biodiversity, enhance climate resilience, and maintain ecological function through rewilding and habitat restoration.

### 6. Climate Resilience

Adaptively manage infrastructure to strengthen resilience against climate change impacts, including extreme heat, increased flood risk, and other hazards.

### 7. Community Participation & Stewardship

Actively engage residents, regional partners, and organizations in the protection and enhancement of local natural resources.

**Note:** No fiscal policies are proposed — the Element does not include any new fees, assessments, or fiscal obligations



## Next Steps

- City Council hearing: June 16, 2026
- Submit Open Space Element to Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (formerly OPR): June 2026 (Tentative)
- City must adopt Open Space Element Update as close to January 1, 2026 as possible



## SB-18 Tribal Consultation Process

- SB 18: All California tribes provided by the Native American Heritage Commission in response to Sacred Land Files search request (Government Code §65352.3) and local governments that adopt or amend general plans or specific plans or create open space designations.
- SB 18 initial notification letters sent out on March 5, 2026
- Received 4 responses from tribal groups
- Consultation to be completed prior to adoption of the Open Space Element Update by the City Council and that tribes be given 90 days to respond to the initial notice.



## Recommended Action

- Adopt City Council Resolution No. 2026-XXX entitled:  
A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FULLERTON, CALIFORNIA, APPROVING A GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT TO ADOPT THE UPDATED OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT, AS APPENDIX M OF THE FULLERTON PLAN AND TO REPLACE CHAPTER 19 IN ITS ENTIRETY
- CEQA Exempt under Section 15061(b)(3) - Common Sense Exemption