Agenda Report

Fullerton City Council

MEETING DATE:	**JUNE 16, 2026**
TO:	**CITY COUNCIL / SUCCESSOR AGENCY**
SUBMITTED BY:	**SUNAYANA THOMAS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
PREPARED BY:	**YAN GAO, AICP, SENIOR PLANNER** **CHRIS SCHAEFER, AICP, PLANNING MANAGER**
SUBJECT:	**GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT TO ADOPT UPDATED OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT AS THE FULLERTON PLAN APPENDIX M AND TO REPLACE CHAPTER 19**

SUMMARY

A request to approve a General Plan Amendment adopting the updated The Fullerton Plan Open Space and Conservation Element, replacing current Chapter 19 in its entirety.

PROPOSED MOTION

1. Adopt resolution No. 2026-XXX.

   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 REPLACE CHAPTER 19 IN ITS ENTIRETY

2. Find approval exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- Approve the Proposed Motion
- Provide alternative direction to staff or continue the item to a future meeting
- Other options brought by City Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Proposed Motion.

CITY MANAGER REMARKS

None.

PRIORITY POLICY STATEMENT

This item matches the following Priority Policy Statements:

Not applicable.

FISCAL IMPACT

Adopting the Open Space and Conservation Element has no direct fiscal impact. Implementation of individual policies and action items identified in the Element will have separate appropriation and budget review through the annual City budgeting process.

DISCUSSION

Purpose and Need for Update

The Open Space and Conservation Element is a mandatory component of The Fullerton Plan, providing policy direction for Citywide parks, recreational facilities, natural open spaces and biological habitat planning, preservation and stewardship. General Plan Chapter 19 serves as the current Element, adopted in 2012 and has not received a comprehensive updated since.

The California Legislature enacted Senate Bill 1425 (SB 1425) in 2022, requiring every city and county to review and update its Open Space Element, with particular attention to equitable access, climate resilience and rewilding opportunities. The City initiated a comprehensive update in September 2025, retaining Michael Baker International as the consulting team. The update also incorporates Assembly Bill 1889 (AB 1889) requirements pertaining to wildlife connectivity and reflects applicable environmental justice mandates.

Coordinated Planning Process

The City developed the Open Space and Conservation Element update simultaneously with the first Environmental Justice Element, reflecting an integrated approach within The Fullerton Plan. The Community and Economic Development Department coordinated the process bringing together multiple planning disciplines, including open space, conservation, parks and environmental justice, using shared technical analyses such as demographic mapping, equity indicators, open space inventories and community health data.

City Council will adopted the two Elements separately as Appendix M and Appendix N but staff designed them to complement one another and advance a unified equity and sustainability vision. This item considers the Open Space and Conservation Element

for adoption. Staff will present the Environmental Justice Element to City Council at a later date.

Public Outreach and Engagement

Community engagement, a cornerstone of the planning process, included:

- An online public survey conducted from October 27, 2025 through November 30, 2025 which received 642 responses.
- In-person outreach at the OktoBOOfest community event on October 30, 2025, engaging over 150 residents directly.
- Posting the Draft Open Space and Conservation Element on the City's website.
- A 30-day public comment period February 20, 2026 through March 20, 2026.
- Multiple digital outreach channels include website banners, email blasts to residents, Instagram posts and digital display boards at the Transit Center.
- Draft Open Space and Conservation Element Presentation to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Staff received comments from several interested parties including Angela Lindstrom (Board President of Friends of Coyote Hills), Jane Riefer, Peter Howell (Rutan and Tucker), Stacey Wright, Kent Morris and others. Staff carefully reviewed all public comments and implemented in the Open Space Element document where possible.

Senate Bill 18 Tribal Consultation

The City notified 34 California Native American tribe representatives via email and postal mail regarding the proposed Open Space and Conservation Element adoption, consistent with Senate Bill 18 requirements. The City received responses from several tribes confirming receipt of the notice and one tribe requested consultation with staff. Responding tribes noted the project area (i.e., the City boundaries) falls within the ancestral territory of the Tongva / Kizh and Acjachemen (Juaneño) peoples.

The Juaneño Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation - Belardes tribe requested the City consider designating and/or providing a dedicated reburial site within City boundaries. The tribe outlined preferred site characteristics, including minimum acreage, sited at a remote and secluded setting, have a west-facing orientation, have no recreational use or signage on it and have a discreet access path. Staff acknowledged the request and will carry this guidance forward as planning efforts progress, subject to internal review. Staff sent a thank-you letter in response, affirming that this topic will remain an ongoing dialogue.

Planning Commission Hearing

The Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing On April 22, 2026 to consider the proposed updated Element. Staff presented the planning process overview, community engagement findings and the Draft Element goals and policies.

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

Draft Element Overview

Appendix M: Open Space and Conservation Element (June 2026) has three main components:

Section 1

- Introduction and Statutory Requirements (Sections 1.1–1.2)
- Planning Process and Community Engagement Summary (Section 1.3)
- Relationship to Other General Plan Documents (Section 1.4).

Section 2

- Existing Conditions Analysis encompassing open space inventory, access mapping, vegetation types, habitat connectivity and urban canopy data. Collectively, Fullerton public open spaces encompass 1,383 acres, representing approximately ten percent of the City total land area.
- Exhibit 2-1: Open Space Inventory. In Fullerton, open space includes parks, trails and recreational areas, as well as land preserved in its natural state for conservation.

Section 3

- Proposed Goals and Policies organized under seven key goals, based on community outreach feedback, SB 1425 requirements, examination of current Chapter 19 goals and policies and analysis of existing conditions and inventories. This forms the City's future holistic vision of safeguarding, maintaining and enhancing these resources. The commitment places conservation at the heart of the City vision, preserving the integrity of its landscapes while promoting sustainability for current and future generations.
- Seven Goals of the Updated Element

The seven goals and supporting policies represent the forward-looking City vision for open space stewardship, conservation and community benefit.

Goal	Focus Area	Summary
Goal 1	Responsible Management	Balance public use with ecological health through coordinated management of existing open spaces, watershed stewardship and high-quality maintenance of parks and sensitive areas.
Goal 2	Future Open Space Planning	Guide development, preservation and stewardship of future open spaces through forward-thinking planning, including priority acquisition of high-value ecological areas such as

		West Coyote Hills and neighborhood greening in underserved districts.
Goal 3	Habitat Conservation	Protect and enhance natural systems by conserving sensitive habitats and waterways, restoring native vegetation and biodiversity and preserving conservation areas including coastal sage scrub, chaparral and riparian corridors.
Goal 4	Accessibility and Trail Connectivity	Increase inclusivity of open space resources through an expanded, connected trail network, improved ADA accessibility, multi-modal access, safe shared-use policies and a rail-to-trail strategy.
Goal 5	Rewilding and Ecological Resilience	Strengthen biodiversity and climate resilience through urban rewilding, habitat linkage, wildlife corridor protection and nature-based solutions including drought-tolerant landscaping and pollinator gardens.
Goal 6	Green Infrastructure and Climate Adaptation	Ensure Fullerton's infrastructure is adaptively managed to address extreme heat, flooding and air quality through cooling corridors, green streets, stormwater management features and urban canopy expansion.
Goal 7	Community Participation and Partnership	Strengthen civic engagement through partnerships with regional agencies, academic institutions and community organizations, with multilingual outreach and dedicated programs for youth, seniors and underserved residents.

Clearly numbered policies, written at the Citywide, district and project levels, where applicable, reinforce the seven goals. The Element does not include any new fees, assessments or fiscal obligations.

Appendix M Supplement (Attachment 4) documents the complete community outreach summary. Staff prepared an Action Plan (Attachment 5) as an internal implementation framework to advance Element goals and policies. Staff will periodically review and update to remain coordinated with relevant City plans and departmental priorities.

Adopting the updated Appendix M: Open Space and Conservation Element will remove the original Chapter 19 and replace with reference pages (Attachment 12) to maintain the overall Fullerton Plan structure completeness.

Analysis and Findings

Consistency with State Law

Staff specifically structured the Draft Element to meet all applicable State legislative requirements:

- SB 1425 (Open Space and Equity): Goals 1, 2 and 4 address equitable access, targeting open space gaps in Districts 3, 4 and 5. Goals 5 and 6 integrate Climate resilience, incorporating fire, flood and urban heat vulnerability assessments. Goal 5

identifies rewilding opportunities, supported by the Existing Conditions analysis (Section 2.5).

- 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 framework to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts on wildlife movement.

Internal Consistency with The Fullerton Plan

Element Section 1.4 reinforces goals across multiple components of The Fullerton Plan, including the Built Environment Element through support for multi-modal trails, the Community Element through linking parks to public health outcomes and the Natural Environment Element through establishing clear conservation targets. The updated Element is internally consistent with the Land Use, Conservation, Safety and Environmental Justice Elements.

Responsiveness to Community Input

Proposed policies directly reflect key themes identified during community outreach, including:

- Amenities and maintenance improvements (P1.5, P1.10, P4.8), responding to resident requests for restrooms, shade structures, seating and improved upkeep.
- Safety and enforcement policies (P1.10, P4.9, P4.10), addressing concerns regarding e-bike conflicts, personal security and homeless encampments in open spaces.
- Open space equity policies (P2.4, P4.11, P5.10), prioritizing green space investment in underserved areas in Districts 4 and 5.
- Conservation and rewilding policies (Goal 5), reflecting strong community support for protecting natural resources such as Coyote Hills and enhancing native habitats.

Environmental Review (CEQA)

This General Plan Amendment is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the Common Sense Exemption. The Open Space and Conservation Element is a policy document that does not authorize direct physical changes to the environment. Future projects implemented under the framework will undergo their own project-level CEQA review. Based on the policy-level nature of the update, staff does not anticipate significant environmental impacts from Element adoption.

Staff prepared a Notice of Exemption and will file the updated Open Space and Conservation Element with the Orange County Clerk-Recorder upon adoption.

<u>Attachments:</u>

- Attachment 1 – PowerPoint Presentation
- Attachment 2 – Draft City Council Resolution No. 2026-XXX

- Attachment 3 – Appendix M: Draft Open Space and Conservation Element (
- Attachment 4 – Appendix M Supplement: Online Public Survey Responses
- Attachment 5 – Draft Action Plan by Michael Baker International
- Attachment 6 – 30-Day Public Review Period Public Comments and Responses
- Attachment 7 – Senate Bill 18 Notification Letter and Tribal Responses
- Attachment 8 – City Webpage Dedicated to Open Space and Conservation Element
- Attachment 9 – Planning Commission Resolution No. PC-2026-06 (April 22, 2026)
- Attachment 10 – Planning Commission Staff Report (April 22, 2026)
- Attachment 11 – Draft Planning Commission Minutes (April 22, 2026)
- Attachment 12 – Original Chapter 19: Reference Pages Following Removal
- Attachment 13 – Draft California Environmental Quality Act Notice of Exemption

cc: City Manager Eddie Manfro