

# **2030 STRATEGIC PLAN**

## **CITY OF DAVIS OPEN SPACE PROGRAM**



Riparian Habitat at South Fork Preserve, West of Mace Boulevard

*A PLAN TO SUPPORT THE CITY'S SUSTAINED EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE RURAL AND URBAN MOSAIC THAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE IN DAVIS.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Davis citizens have a strong interest in open space preservation. This Strategic Plan -- which builds on, refines, and replaces a similar plan approved by the City Council in 2002 -- is intended to address this strong community interest by providing readers with a clear roadmap for preserving and managing open space in and around the City through 2030, the final year of Measure O, the City's open space parcel tax.

The opening section, *A Legacy of Open Space Preservation*, discusses the current state of the City's Open Space Program and the benefits it provides to the community and landowners. This section also describes the types of open space in and around Davis and which ones the City owns and manages. It concludes with a discussion of the various tools the City uses to preserve open space, such as conservation easements and agricultural buffer/mitigation requirements.

The next section, *Roadmap to Open Space Preservation*, provides the reader with an overview of how this Strategic Plan was developed and how it is organized.

The rest of the Strategic Plan describes the priority goals, objectives, and action items that staff will pursue through 2030. The plan concludes with a discussion of how the City will measure success, and how it will make decisions about future open space acquisitions (See Appendix A).

This Strategic Plan is part of a set of planning and management documents for the City's Open Space Program. This set of planning and management documents includes:

1. **Expenditure Guidelines (Text of Measure O)**, which provide the legal underpinning for how the City's open space parcel taxes can be spent;
2. **A Background/Midterm Progress Report**, which provides useful background on the history of open space preservation in Davis and documents progress through 2015;
3. **Five-Year Implementation Plans**, which report on recent progress and describe more specific projects for the coming five years. These shorter-term plans allow flexibility to respond to changing conditions while still pursuing consistent longer-term goals;
4. **Budget Summary Documents**, which provides residents with an easy-to-understand snapshot of the annual budget for the City's Open Space Program; and
5. **Fee-Title Land Management Plans**, which describe how the City will manage its various open space areas and the land management techniques that will be used.

All of these documents are posted on [open space pages](#) on the City's website.

# 2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

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## A LEGACY OF OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

Like most communities in the Great Central Valley, the history and character of Davis is tightly interwoven with the surrounding landscape. The original human inhabitants of the Davis area, the Patwin tribe, chose to live along the banks of Putah Creek since it provided for the necessities of their existence. Later, settlers chose this area because cultivation of the rich alluvial soils provided sustenance and income. The railways followed to transport agricultural goods to the population centers of northern California. Soon after, the University of California selected this



*Figure 1: Milkweed on Old Lincoln Highway*

area for its farm campus due in part to the quality of the soils and the existing transportation infrastructure. This abbreviated history shows that the City of Davis is truly a product of its surroundings.

Today, these surroundings continue to play an important role in defining the character of Davis. The open farms and remaining natural native landscapes around the City help create a sense of place and contribute to the vitality of Davis. Since 1958, the Davis General Plan has included open space and agricultural protection policies that recognize this important link. Civic leaders have understood

for many years that these open spaces strengthen the connection between citizens and their community by helping to define a limit to the area that they perceive as their home. Among the benefits derived from enhancing this connection is that citizens who closely identify with a place or social group are more likely to be involved in activities that build community. In addition, these open space areas contribute to the vitality of Davis by sustaining the regional ecosystem, supporting the local economy, providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and learning, and offering visual relief from urban landscapes. The overall objective of this Strategic Plan is to support the City's sustained efforts to maintain and enhance the rural and urban mosaic that contributes to the high quality of life in Davis.

### The Open Space Program Today

The City's formal Open Space Program was established in 1990 to implement long-standing policies that called for the protection of the farmlands and habitat areas that surround the community. Since that time, it has been a national model for open space preservation. The major goals of the program include (1) securing long-term protection of open space lands around Davis, (2) providing and improving long-term management and monitoring of open spaces the City owns, (3) promoting and supporting the enjoyment of public open space lands, (4) engaging citizens in planning and caring for open space areas, and (5) nurturing productive partnerships with other organizations to achieve the above goals.

The citizens of Davis also realized that accomplishing these goals would take a stable and reliable funding source. So, in 2000, Davis voters passed Measure O, an ongoing parcel tax dedicated to open space preservation and maintenance. The full text of Measure O is located in Article 15.17 (Open Space Protection Tax) of the City’s Municipal Code, which can be found by clicking [here](#). Since then, Measure O funds have enabled the City to make remarkable progress towards achieving its long-term vision for land conservation within the Davis Planning Area.

Measure O, which expires in 2030, currently generates about \$650,000 a year, money that can be used to maintain the City’s open space areas or leverage land acquisition and restoration grants. As of 2017, there was approximately \$5.1 million in the Measure O reserve account. A few key successes of the City’s Open Space Program to date include:

- ***Thousands of Acres Protected.*** Since 1990, the City has been able to permanently protect more than 5,300 acres of land within the Davis Planning Area, which is an amount approximately equal to the footprint of the City of Davis itself. These acres include agricultural lands, riparian corridors, habitat areas, and land under threat of conversion to urban uses.
- ***Hundreds of Acres Maintained for People and Wildlife.*** The City’s Open Space Program actively maintains about 235 acres of open space for the enjoyment of Davis residents and for wildlife species. These lands include ag buffers, grasslands/uplands habitat, riparian habitat and native plant sites. The largest is the 110-acre South Fork Preserve. These lands do not include stormwater conveyance channels and detention basins (i.e., Julie Partansky Wildlife Pond, West Area Pond, Toad Hollow, North Davis Channel), which are maintained by the City’s Public Works Department, or the City’s urban greenbelts and parks, which are maintained by the City’s Parks Department.
- ***Millions of Dollars Leveraged.*** Measure O’s greatest value is its leveraging potential. By itself, Measure O does not generate enough money to purchase significant tracts of land under fee title ownership or easement. Using the tremendous leveraging power of Measure O, and in conjunction with other monetary tools, the City has been able to purchase about \$22 million worth of conservation easements since 2000 using only about \$8.1 million in City funds (\$5.6 million in Measure O parcel tax dollars and \$2.5 million in other City funds).



### Program Successes

- More than 5,300 acres protected
- More than 230 acres owned and maintained by the City for residents and wildlife
- More than \$14 million leveraged for open space land acquisitions

These successes are remarkable given the small number of City employees who are working to implement the City’s Open Space Program. As of 2017, the City’s Open Space Program was staffed by one half-time program manager, one full-time lands manager, one part-time

maintenance worker, and contract labor. More information about the City’s Open Space Program and what it has accomplished over the last several decades is discussed in detail in the Background and Midterm Progress Report, which can be found by clicking [here](#).

## Benefits to the Community

The following are just a few of the benefits the Open Space Program provides the community:

- Helps to create a healthy, livable, sustainable community
- Preserves agricultural land for the production of local products
- Preserves natural areas for wildlife habitat, including for native pollinators
- Preserves natural areas for human recreation and educational study
- Preserves community identity by providing separation between urbanized areas
- Provides connections to the land and preserves land for future generations
- Preserves view corridors and scenery
- Provides relief from urbanization

## Benefits to Landowners

The following are just a few of the benefits the Open Space Program provides landowners:

- Provides peace of mind to those who would like their land to remain as farmland or natural areas
- Provides financial incentives, such as income from selling a conservation easement
- Provides an ability to continue farming and leave the land to heirs
- Provides tax advantages, such as property tax advantages, and reductions in income taxes, estate taxes, or capital gains taxes
- Provides ecosystem benefits such as crop pollination, groundwater infiltration, and flood control



Figure 2: Agricultural land around Davis

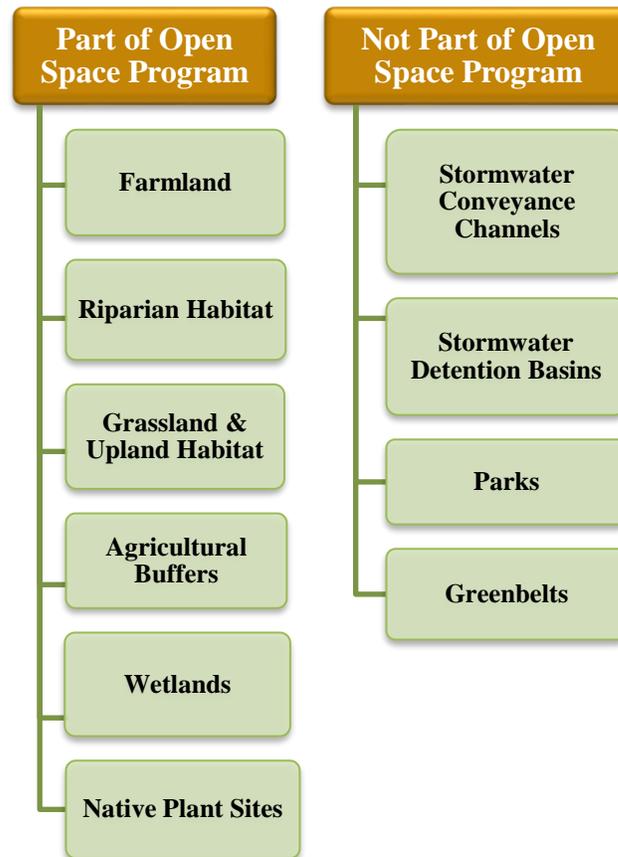
## Types of Open Space in and Around Davis

Not all land that people think of as “open space” meets the definition under the City’s Open Space Program. Under the Open Space Program, open space means:

*“Land that is in a predominantly natural state or altered for natural resources-based uses (i.e., farming) and may include, but is not limited to, riparian habitat, agricultural lands, grassland and upland habitat, wetlands, agricultural buffers, and native plant sites.”*

The definition of “open space” under the City’s Open Space Program does not include parks and greenbelts (managed by City Parks staff), or stormwater conveyance channels and detention basins (managed by City Public Works staff). The graphic below illustrates what types of land uses are considered “open space” under the City’s Open Space Program:

Figure 3: Types of open space in the City’s Open Space Program



The following summarizes the 5,333 open space acres in the Open Space Program as of 2018:

- Farmland.** The City has protected about 4,311 acres of farmland within the Davis Planning Area. Of those acres, about 323 acres are owned by the City and leased to tenant farmers. Examples include land along the South Fork of Putah Creek leased to Los Rios Farms and Sostena Corporation and 25 acres off Mace Boulevard farmed by Bob Dettling Farms. The rest of these acres are private property, but are encumbered with City-owned conservation easements. More information about conservation easements is provided in the *Tools for Preservation* section. Examples include Miles/Kidwell Farm, Leland Ranch, and Eoff Farm.
- Riparian Habitat.** The City has protected about 309 acres of riparian habitat within the Davis Planning Area. Of those acres, about 94 acres are owned by the City. Examples include the Putah Creek Parkway, South Fork Preserve, and the North Davis Channel (Open space staff only maintain the channel banks). The rest of these acres are private property, but are encumbered with a City-owned conservation easement. Examples include the easements the City owns along Willow Slough and Dry Slough.

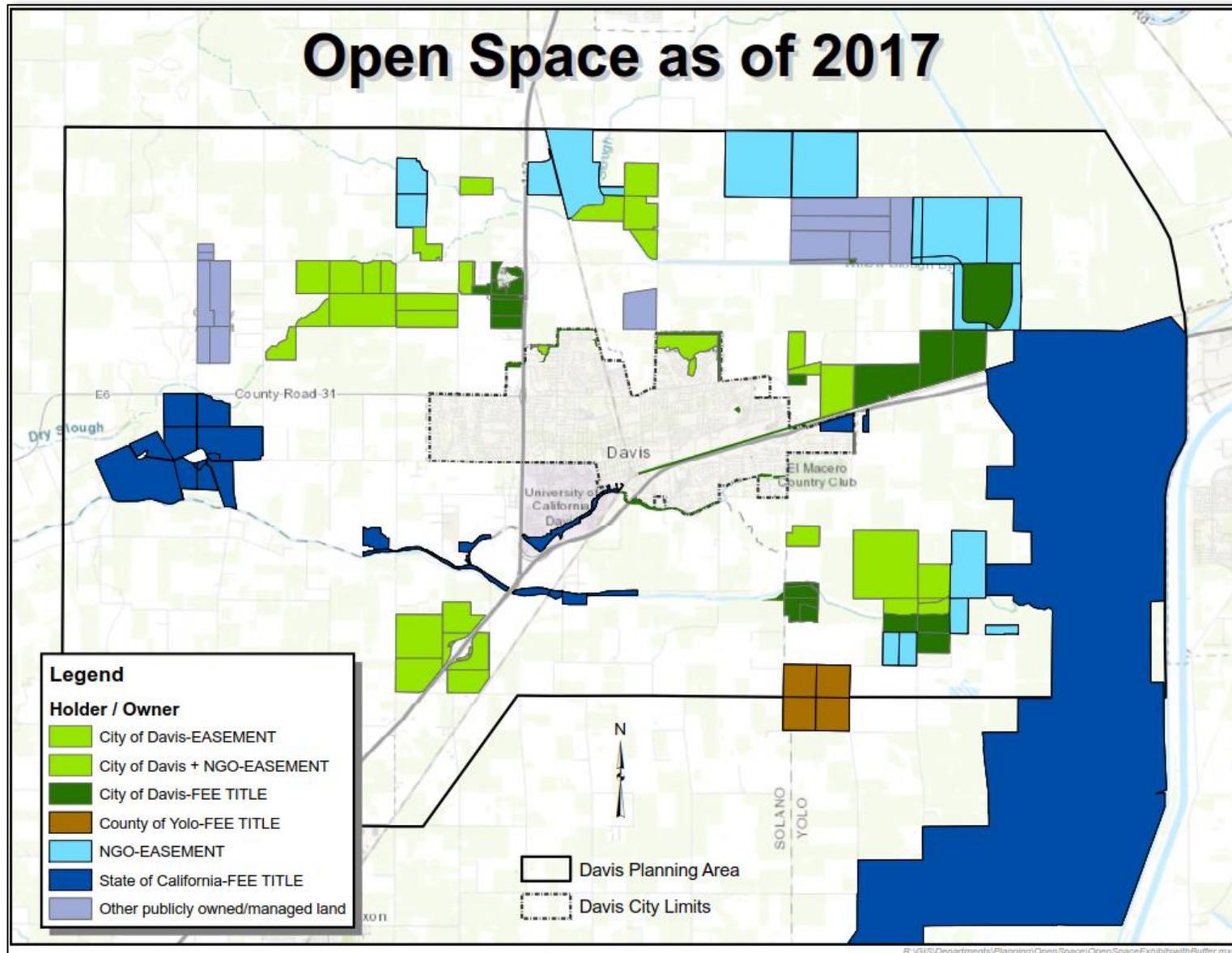
- **Grassland & Upland Habitat.** The City has protected about 91 acres of grassland and upland habitat within the Davis Planning Area. All of these acres are owned by the City. Examples include portions of Putah Creek Parkway and South Fork Preserve, and three acres adjacent to the Julie Partansky Wildlife Pond known as the North Davis Pond Upland Area.
- **Agricultural Buffers.** The City has protected about 209 acres of open space used as ag buffers between urban and farming uses within the Davis Planning Area. All of these acres are owned by the City. Examples include the Wildhorse and El Macero Ag Buffers.
- **Wetlands.** The City has protected about 404 acres of wetlands within the Davis Planning Area. All of these acres are owned by the City. Examples include the Davis Wetlands.
- **Native Plant Sites.** The City also owns about 10 acres of land within the Davis Planning Area categorized as native plant sites. Examples include the Old Lincoln Highway, the North Davis hedgerow, and sites known as Willowbank #9 and #10.

The figure below summarizes the types of open space in the Open Space Program, who owns these lands, and who maintains them. A map of these lands can be found on Figure 5.

Figure 4: Summary of open space in the City's Open Space Program

Primary Land Use	Who owns land?	Who maintains land?	Examples
<b>Farmland</b> (≈ 4,311 acres)	Private property owners (City owns conservation easement)	Private property owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leland Ranch</li> <li>• Miles/Kidwell Farm</li> <li>• Eoff Farm</li> </ul>
	City (≈ 323 acres) (City owns fee title interest)	Tenant farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• South Fork - Los Rios Farms</li> <li>• South Fork – Sostena Corp.</li> <li>• Mace Blvd – Dettling Farms</li> </ul>
<b>Riparian Habitat</b> (≈ 309 acres)	Private property owners (City owns conservation easement)	Private property owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willow Slough easements</li> <li>• Dry Slough easements</li> </ul>
	City (≈ 94 acres) (City owns fee title interest)	City (Open Space staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putah Creek Parkway</li> <li>• South Fork Preserve</li> <li>• North Davis Channel (Channel Banks Only)</li> </ul>
<b>Grassland &amp; Upland Habitat</b> (≈ 91 acres)	City (City owns fee title interest)	City (Open Space staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putah Creek Parkway</li> <li>• South Fork Preserve</li> <li>• North Davis Pond Upland Area</li> </ul>
<b>Ag Buffers</b> (≈ 209 acres)	City (City owns fee title &/or easement)	City (Open Space staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wildhorse Ag Buffer</li> <li>• Wildhorse Golf Course</li> <li>• El Macero Ag Buffer</li> </ul>
<b>Wetlands*</b> (≈ 404 acres)	City	City (Open Space staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Davis Wetlands</li> </ul>
<b>Native Plant Sites</b> (≈ 10 acres)	City	City (Open Space staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Old Lincoln Highway</li> <li>• North Davis Hedgerow</li> <li>• Willow Bank #9 and #10</li> </ul>
Notes:			
* As of 2018, the City's Open Space Program had not yet taken over the management of the Davis Wetlands. The transfer of management responsibilities from the City's public works staff to the City's open space staff is expected in 2018. The Davis Wetlands was included in this table to acknowledge this expectation.			

Figure 5: Open space within the Davis Planning Area as of 2017



## Open Space the City Owns and Manages

In total, the City owns about 962 acres (18%) of the 5,333 acres of open space within the Davis Planning Area. *Of those acres owned by the City, about 639 acres (66%) are publicly accessible (the remainder are leased to tenant farmers).* The City’s Open Space staff currently manages all of these publicly accessible acres, except the Davis Wetlands (See Figures 6 and 7).

The figure below (Figure 6) and the map on the following page (Figure 7) summarizes the 639 acres maintained (or soon to be maintained) by the City’s Open Space staff:

Figure 6: Open space maintained by City Open Space staff

Property	Type of Open Space	Acreage
1 Wildhorse Agricultural Buffer	Agricultural Buffer	38.00
2 El Macero Agricultural Buffer	Agricultural Buffer	3.00
3 Old Lincoln Highway	Native Plant Site	4.00
4 North Davis Hedgerow	Native Plant Site	2.00
5 Water Tank Site (at John Jones Road)	Native Plant Site	2.00
6 Willowbank #9	Native Plant Site	1.50
7 Willowbank #10	Native Plant Site	0.25
8 Washoe Street Remnant	Native Plant Site	0.10
9 South Fork Preserve	Grasslands/Upland Habitat	80.00
10 Open Space Area at Mace Ranch Park	Grasslands/Upland Habitat	4.00
11 North Davis Pond Upland Area	Grasslands/Upland Habitat	3.00
12 Putah Creek Parkway	Grasslands/Upland Habitat	4.00
13 South Fork Preserve	Riparian Habitat	32.00
14 South Fork of Putah Creek (Leased to Los Rios Farms)	Riparian Habitat	30.00
15 Woodbridge Open Space Area	Riparian Habitat	3.50
16 North Davis Channel (Channel Banks Only)	Riparian Habitat	13.00
17 Putah Creek Parkway - Riparian Habitat	Riparian Habitat	15.00
18 Davis Wetlands (Potential Future Open Space Site)*	Wetlands	404.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>639.35</b>
* As of 2018, the Davis Wetlands was still managed by the City's Public Works staff. However, it is included in this table as an open space site because it is expected to become an open space site in 2018 or 2019 and will be managed by the City's Open Space staff.		

As of 2018, these acres were maintained by one full-time employee (the City’s Open Space Lands Manager), one seasonal temporary part-time worker, and contractors. Their primary job is to manage these lands for wildlife habitat and compatible human recreation. Some of the main work they do includes (1) controlling and/or eliminating invasive plant species, (2) planting native plants, trees and grasses, (3) improving the land’s habitat value, (4) correcting problems resulting from vandalism and illegal overnight camping, and (5) removing garbage.



## Tools for Preservation

The City uses a variety of tools to protect open space, which maximizes the effectiveness of the City's limited funding. These tools all do different things, but they work together to implement the City's Open Space Program. All of these tools are discussed briefly below:

1. **Conservation Easements.** The City can acquire a partial interest in land (i.e., an easement) that protects the land in perpetuity for agriculture or habitat. By accepting an easement on his/her land, the landowner agrees to limit what the land can be used for in perpetuity. The cost of an easement increases substantially as more property rights (such as public access) are included in the terms of the easement. The City usually co-owns the easement with a land trust. Land trust staff monitors the easement properties annually to ensure the terms of the conservation agreement are being met. The City pays for these easements using grant funds, leveraged with matching funds from the Measure O Special Tax Fund, agriculture mitigation fees, and development impact fees for open space.
2. **Land Purchases.** The City can acquire the fee title interest in land and keep it for recreational, habitat, or farming purposes, or resell the property subject to a conservation easement, such as the former Leland Ranch property near the Mace Boulevard curve. These lands usually provide public access. The City pays for these land acquisitions using grant funds, leveraged with matching funds from the Measure O Special Tax Fund, agriculture mitigation fees, and development impact fees for open space.
3. **A Stable, Reliable Funding Source.** Before the passage of Measure O in 2000, the City did not have a stable, reliable funding source to acquire and manage open space. Measure O now provides about \$650,000 every year for this purpose. Because it is a stable and reliable revenue source, Measure O has given the City of Davis an enviable advantage in the stiff competition for state and federal open space land acquisition grants.

4. **Right-to-Farm Ordinance Requirements.** In 1995, the City Council approved the Right-to-Farm and Farmland Preservation Ordinance (Ordinance 1823). The first municipal ordinance of its kind, the City's ground-breaking work has spawned similar farmland protection efforts in California and in other states. The main goals of the ordinance are to: (1) preserve and encourage agricultural land use and operations within the Davis Planning Area (See Figure 8), (2) reduce the occurrence of conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural land uses, and (3) reduce the loss of agricultural resources by limiting the circumstances under which agricultural operations may be deemed a nuisance.

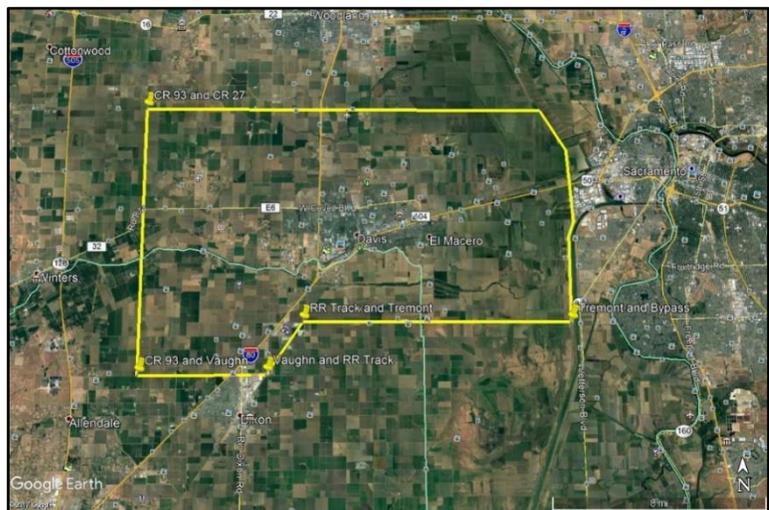
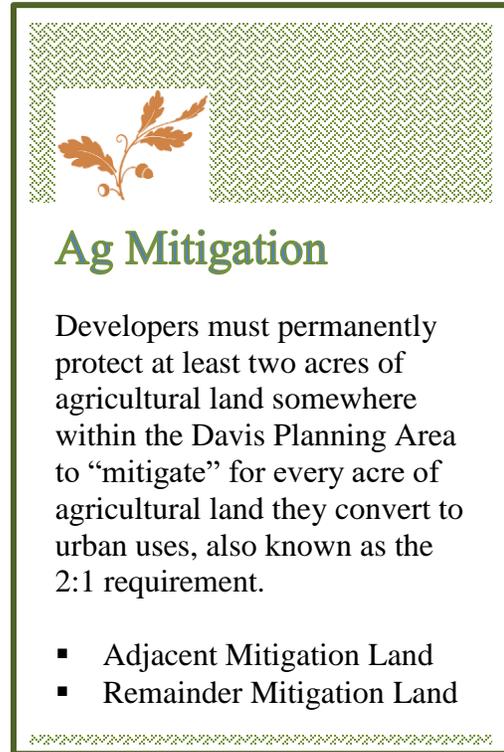


Figure 8: Davis Planning Area

To achieve the ordinance's objectives, the City Council included two key requirements that developers must comply with if they are proposing to convert land from agricultural uses to non-agricultural uses, and their project is adjacent to agricultural land: These requirements, which were updated by the City Council in 2007, are the agriculture mitigation requirement and the agricultural buffer requirement.

- a. *The agriculture mitigation requirement.* Under the City's agricultural land mitigation requirement, developers must permanently protect at least two acres of agricultural land somewhere within the Davis Planning Area to "mitigate" for every acre of agricultural land they convert to urban uses (i.e., the 2:1 requirement). Permanently protecting the land means either buying it outright or buying a conservation easement on the land. Developers must first preserve the land directly adjacent to their project (the "Adjacent Mitigation Land"). If this adjacent land is not enough to satisfy the 2:1 agricultural land mitigation requirement, then the developer must look elsewhere within the Davis Planning Area (the "Remainder Mitigation Land"). Both of these categories are briefly discussed below:



### Ag Mitigation

Developers must permanently protect at least two acres of agricultural land somewhere within the Davis Planning Area to “mitigate” for every acre of agricultural land they convert to urban uses, also known as the 2:1 requirement.

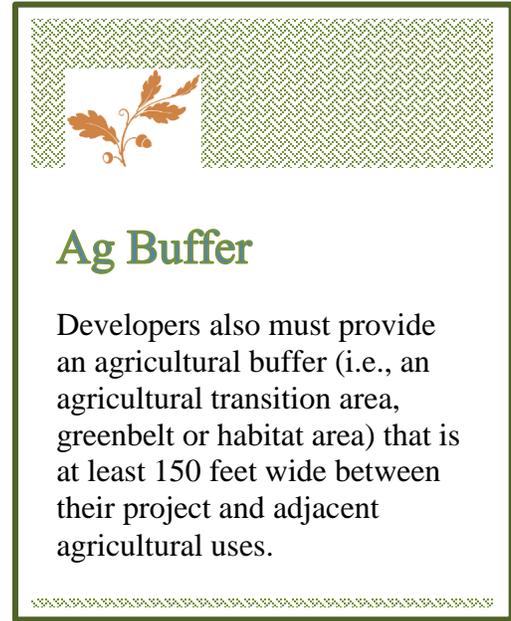
- Adjacent Mitigation Land
- Remainder Mitigation Land

- ✓ Adjacent Mitigation Land. The developer must first protect the land along the entire non-urbanized perimeter of the project. For example, if a proposed housing development abuts farmland, the housing developer must protect that farmland. If the developer cannot protect this land for some reason, then the developer must provide the Adjacent Mitigation Land on the development site itself. The Adjacent Mitigation Land must be of a size that is economically viable as farmland (i.e., it must be a minimum 1/4 mile in width). Developers do not have to mitigate for the land being used as the required on-site agricultural buffer.
- ✓ Remainder Mitigation Land. If the Adjacent Mitigation Land is not enough to satisfy the 2:1 agricultural land mitigation requirement, then the developer must look to protect land elsewhere within the Davis Planning Area (See Figure 8). Incentives, or location-based “credits,” are provided to the developer to protect land in areas targeted for permanent protection by the City, such as land within a 1/4 mile of the city limits and land within “priority acquisition areas” as determined by the City Council. These priority acquisition areas (See Figure 12 on the following pages) currently include land adjacent to the city limits, land separating the City from neighboring cities, and land providing particular agricultural, biological/natural and/or scenic benefits. This tool incentivizes developers to protect agricultural land in priority acquisition areas.

b. *The agricultural buffer requirement.* Developers also must provide an agricultural buffer (i.e., an agricultural transition area, greenbelt or habitat area) that is at least 150 feet wide between their project and adjacent agricultural uses. This tool aims to address potential conflicts between urban and rural land uses. This tool supports farming adjacent to urban uses; thereby helping to protect agricultural land at the city's edge.

5. ***The Measure R/J Vote.*** Measure J (the Citizens' Right to Vote on Future Use of Open Space and Agricultural Lands Ordinance) was first passed by Davis voters in 2000. Measure J was included on the City of Davis' June 2010 ballot as Measure R and was approved for renewal, which extended the sunset date to December 31, 2020. Measure R requires an affirmative citizen vote for General Plan Amendments that re-designate land from agricultural or open space to urban uses. After completion of environmental review and public hearings, the City Council may choose to put a proposed land use change on the ballot for voter consideration. This tool gives the community the ability to weigh in on development proposals at the city's edge.
6. ***Conservation Partnerships.*** The City works closely with local conservation organizations to implement its open space protection goals. Close collaboration with these organizations and identification of common objectives has allowed the City to achieve the level of success it has in protecting open space. Wherever possible, the City develops partnerships with regional and national conservation organizations that share its objectives. The City also joins organizations, lobbies state and federal representatives, and participates in regional open space discussions as a way to build partnerships with regional and national organizations.
7. ***Education and Outreach.*** Education is a key factor in building strong public support for the City's Open Space Program. Appropriate and well-managed public access on City open space lands provides opportunities for citizens to learn about the natural and cultural history of the Davis area and the Central Valley. Increasing public knowledge and appreciation of agricultural and natural systems will improve support for their conservation. The City works closely with school districts, local conservation organizations (e.g.: Yolo Basin Foundation), and outside agencies to develop open space related educational materials and firsthand learning experiences.

Since its inception, the Open Space Program has led to the protection of more than 5,200 acres of agricultural land and habitat areas surrounding the City through the acquisition of lands either in fee title or under conservation easements.



# ROADMAP TO OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

This Strategic Plan builds on, refines, and replaces the 2002 Acquisition and Management Plan using results from focused public engagement efforts that were undertaken in 2016. The plan’s framework consists of specific goals, objectives, and action items in six categories that will guide open space preservation for the next 15 years.

## Plan Development Process

In 2002, the City adopted an Acquisition and Management Plan for open space (the “2002 A&M Plan”) that provided a framework for implementing the various open space protection and stewardship goals outlined in the City of Davis’s General Plan. The 2002 A&M Plan was the result of a year-long public engagement process to refine the City’s open space priorities after the passage of Measure O in 2000. The purpose of the 2002 A&M Plan was to provide guidance to staff, advisory bodies, and decision-makers as they considered possible open space acquisitions and management choices. It was intended to be used in conjunction with other more site-specific selection and management tools, such as property evaluation criteria and site-specific management plans. The framework laid out in the 2002 A&M Plan was intended to:



Figure 9: Honey bee on Fremontia shrub

1. Set general goals and policies that will direct the City’s effort to protect and effectively manage open space lands and resources;
2. Provide the basis for informed open space land and resource acquisition decisions;
3. Provide direction for land and resource management decisions;
4. Provide organizational guidelines for the Open Space Program budget;
5. Establish a framework for a consistent, objective, and open decision-making process; and
6. Provide a basis for evaluating the City’s progress toward reaching the open space protection goals established in the City’s General Plan.

In 2016, midway through the 30-year term of Measure O, the City, in partnership with the Open Space and Habitat Commission, embarked on an outreach effort to the Davis community to solicit a wide range of opinions, ideas and recommendations to strengthen the City’s Open Space Program. This effort relied on three separate, but inter-related, outreach methods: (1) a community survey, (2) focus groups, and (3) a major community workshop. Each of these is briefly discussed below.

- *Community Survey.* A broad-based community survey, administered online and in paper form, was created to capture the widest range and diversity of opinions on open space matters. The online survey was available for over three months and was advertised widely. This effort resulted in 400 responses, which is a very solid response rate for a community of approximately 65,000 residents.

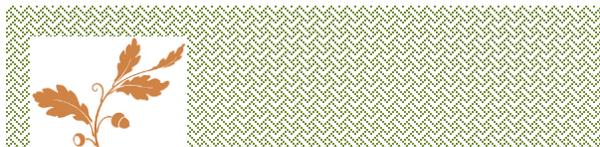
- *Focus Groups.* A highly focused dialogue was conducted with two selected focus groups to get feedback on very specific issues and questions that had come up over the years, and address complex and nuanced issues that a broad survey or a traditional community workshop would not have time or detail to address. These two meetings were attended by 16 individuals who have considerable familiarity and a strong interest in the City’s Open Space Program. These meetings were facilitated and recorded. They helped the City staff and consultant team identify key issues, clarify and define concerns, and guide design and preparation for the major community workshop.

- *Community Workshop.* On March 9, 2016, a major community workshop was held to give residents significant time to provide input on a range of critical open space topics. The workshop, which was also facilitated and recorded, provided opportunities for residents to offer input on flip charts, written statements, and maps. Maps, written materials, and information (including the notes from the focus groups and the preliminary survey results) were made available to the approximately 40 people who attended the workshop. There were large group presentations and discussions and small group table-top discussions to elicit feedback on relevant topics and questions about open space. Input was captured on recorded flip charts and summarized in this report and also captured in map and graphic form.



Figure 10: March 2016 Open Space Community Workshop

The results of this outreach effort are summarized in a report entitled “City of Davis Open Space Program Community Involvement Process” by the U.C. Davis Extension’s Collaboration Center completed in spring 2016. To view this report, click [here](#). The City has used this community feedback as the foundation for this Strategic Plan and has incorporated as many specific community recommendations as possible into the plan’s goals, objectives, and action items.



## Strategic Plan Categories

1. Acquisitions
2. Habitat Restoration & Enhancement
3. Land & Resource Management
4. Public Access & Recreation
5. Financial & Program Accountability
6. Public Engagement & Partnerships

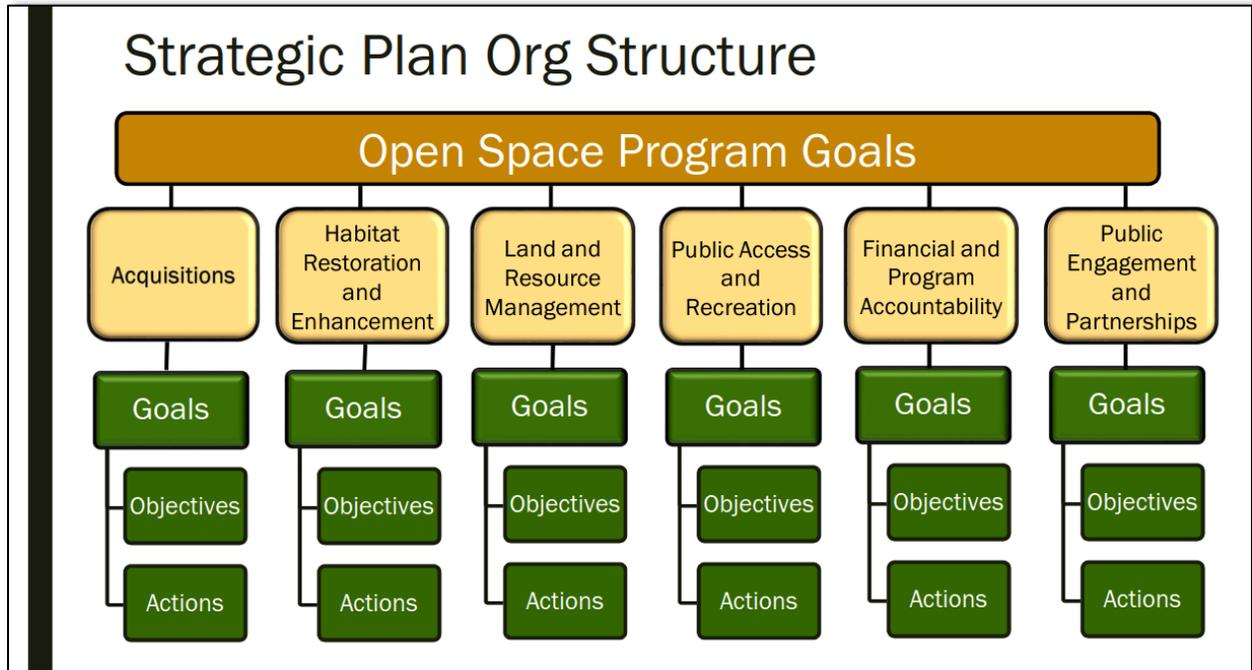
### **Strategic Plan Categories and Framework**

This Strategic Plan for the Open Space Program focuses on goals, objectives, and action items in six specific categories:

1. Acquisitions,
2. Habitat Restoration & Enhancement,
3. Land & Resource Management,
4. Public Access & Recreation,
5. Financial & Program Accountability, and
6. Public Engagement & Partnerships.

The graphic below illustrates the framework for the Strategic Plan:

Figure 11: Plan Framework



The rest of the Strategic Plan focuses on the goals, objectives, and action items in each of the six categories listed above.

In a related effort, the City is updating a number of other guiding documents associated with the Open Space Program as well to make them more clear and responsive to the community. These other documents include:

- ✓ Expenditure Guidelines (Text of Measure O)
- ✓ Background/Midterm Progress Report on Measure O
- ✓ Five-Year Implementation Plans
- ✓ Budget Summary Documents
- ✓ Fee-Title Land Management Plans

All of these documents are posted on the [open space pages](#) on the City’s website.

# ACQUISITIONS

This section provides guidance to decision-makers about open space acquisitions through the year 2030. The subject area of acquisitions includes both the acquisition of a fee title interest in open space, and the acquisition of agricultural and/or habitat conservation easements.

The City carries out its open space protection goals by setting policy and acquiring conservation easements and ownership of land from willing sellers. The City is committed to an approach that maximizes preservation and enhancement of open space lands and resources. An effective, direct, and equitable method for doing so is to purchase protection (easements and fee-title) at a fair market price from willing sellers. Several fundamental principles will guide all acquisitions by the City:

1. *Acquire Land From Willing Sellers Only.* Acquire open space from willing sellers only.<sup>1</sup>
2. *Acquire Land Within Davis Planning Area Only.* Lands or resources must be located within the Davis Planning Area to qualify for acquisition or management by the City.
3. *Stretch the Dollar.* Acquire and hold the least interest in a property necessary to carry out the City's General Plan goals for open space protection. This means the City will be limiting its fee title acquisitions and focusing on conservation easements.
4. *Favor Conservation Easements.* Use conservation easements as the primary method of open space protection. Purchasing only part of a property's rights (such as development rights) protects land at a fraction of the cost of purchasing all the rights (fee title interest), thereby maximizing the acreage that can be brought into the City's Open Space Program. Easements shall be held in perpetuity.
5. *Make Strategic Fee-Title Acquisitions.* Acquire and hold fee-title to properties where protection of unique resources, restoration, or public access is desired.
6. *Pay Fair Market Value.* Acquire land at no more than fair market value, based on a professional appraisal.
7. *Take a Balanced Approach.* Balance efforts to protect natural resources with efforts to maintain agricultural production in the Davis Planning Area.



## Fundamental Principles

1. Acquire Land From Willing Sellers Only
2. Acquire Land Within Davis Planning Area Only
3. Stretch the Dollar
4. Favor Conservation Easements
5. Make Strategic Fee-Title Acquisitions
6. Pay Fair Market Value
7. Take a Balance Approach
8. Seek Multiple Benefits

<sup>1</sup> In rare instances it may be advantageous for a property owner to request condemnation of property by the City. Condemnation will not be used by the City to acquire open space unless requested by the landowner.

8. *Seek Multiple Benefits.* Seek protection of open space lands that overlap multiple acquisition categories.

The City seeks to protect the greatest amount of high quality open space land and resources as possible within its funding constraints. *However, despite remarkable community willingness to pay for open space protection, all undeveloped land and sensitive resources in the Davis Planning Area cannot be protected due to high land costs and multiple competing uses for the land.* In order to maximize the effectiveness of available funding, the City will use the most cost-effective open space protection tools (e.g., conservation easements) and seek to acquire open space that serves to buffer other lands from threat of conversion.

Acquisition categories identify the various types of open space lands and resources identified by the City for protection. These categories help organize the City's acquisition priorities by identifying the land and resource values that are desirable to the community. They are (in no order of importance):

- *Urban Fringe:* Protect land near the city limits to help define the urban limits of Davis and provide an adequate buffer between urban and rural land uses. The conservation purpose is to protect select lands and resources at greatest risk of conversion from urban expansion pressures. These lands are generally located in the historic path of development on the north and west edges of the City. This priority area is linked with the City's growth management policies encouraging infill development and coordination of university housing needs.
- *Community Separator:* Protect land between Davis and neighboring cities to preserve the unique character of each community. The conservation purpose is to protect lands between cities to provide a functional limit to urban expansion pressures from adjoining cities/counties. Davis, Woodland, Dixon, and Yolo County have signed general agreements identifying separator areas and supporting land protection within the boundaries of these areas.
- *Agriculture:* Protect prime agricultural lands and sustainable farming practices (e.g., organic agriculture) to maintain the long-term viability of agriculture in the Davis Planning Area. The conservation purpose is to protect the highest quality agricultural lands facing the greatest risk of conversion. These lands are generally located in the historic path of development to the north and west of the City.
- *Biological and Natural Resources:* Protect important wildlife habitat, sensitive species, and other significant natural resources. The conservation purpose is to protect and enhance

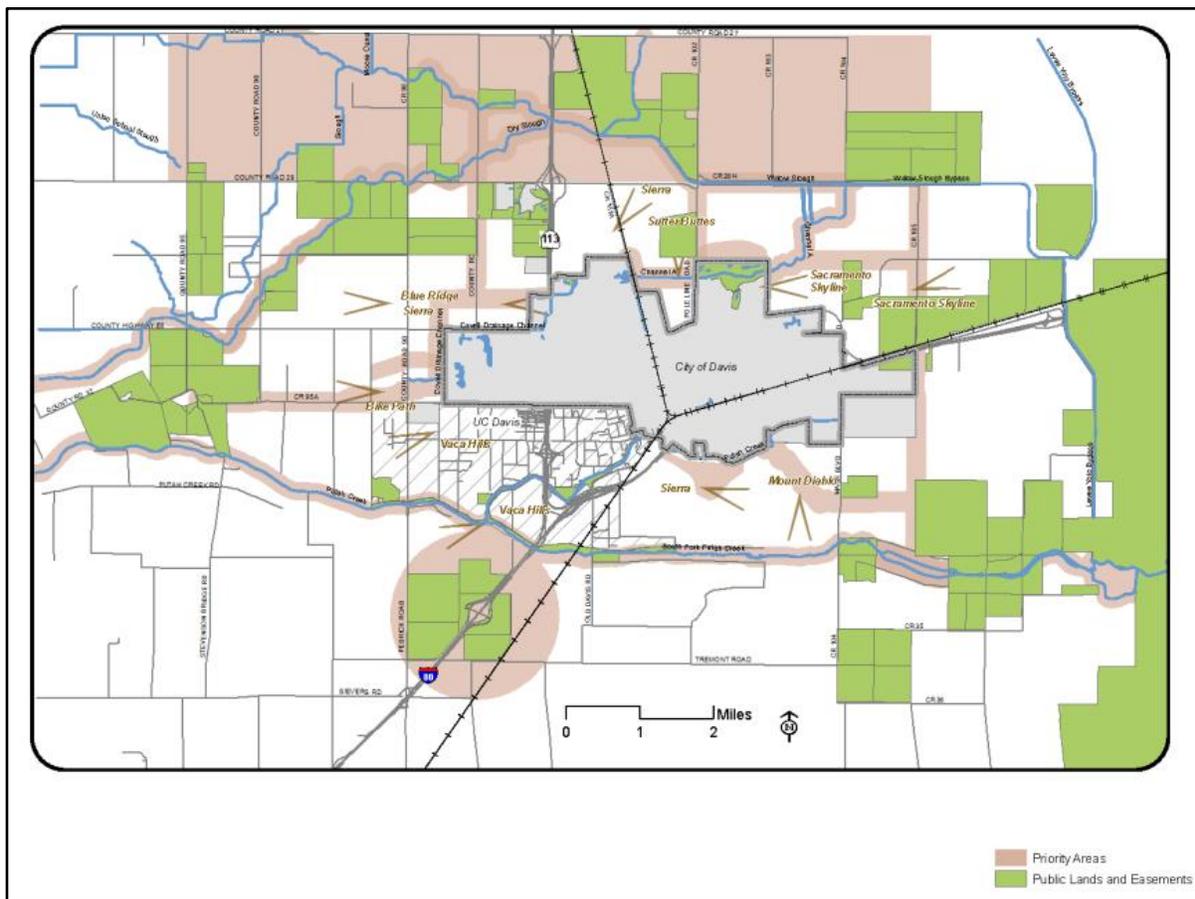


biologically unique areas that contribute to the viability and stability of natural communities. These lands generally contain riparian corridors, remnant oak woodlands, wetlands, or remnant grasslands. This category includes lands that can be enhanced/restored to provide additional wildlife habitat.

- *Scenic Resources*: Protect land providing views and scenic vistas of significant landmarks, such as nearby and distant mountain ranges. The conservation purpose is to preserve community identity through the protection of views of significant local and regional landmarks. These lands generally overlap the Urban Fringe and Community Separator areas.

A map showing the City’s priority acquisition areas can be found below (Figure 12):

Figure 12: Priority Acquisition Areas



For more information about the City’s decision-making process for land acquisitions, please refer to Appendix A attached to this Strategic Plan.

## Goals, Objectives and Action Items

The goals, objectives, and action items for this section are summarized in Figure 13 on the following page and detailed in the following section:

Figure 13: Snapshot of Goals, Objectives and Action Items – Acquisitions



**Goal 1: Protect land near the city limits ("urban fringe" land)**

- Obj A: Acquire strategic parcels in this category (fee title interest or conservation easements)
- Action a: Identify and work with willing landowners



**Goal 2: Protect land between communities ("community separator" land)**

- Obj A: Acquire strategic parcels in this category (fee title interest or conservation easements)
- Action a: Identify and work with willing landowners



**Goal 3: Protect land used for prime agriculture ("agricultural" land)**

- Obj A: Acquire strategic parcels in this category (fee title interest or conservation easements)
- Action a: Identify and work with willing landowners



**Goal 4: Protect land providing habitat ("biological & natural resources" land)**

- Obj A: Acquire strategic parcels in this category (fee title interest or conservation easements)
- Action a: Identify and work with willing landowners



**Goal 5: Protect open space for recreation ("public access & recreation" land)**

- Obj A: Acquire strategic parcels in this category (fee title interest or conservation easements)
- Action a: Identify and work with willing landowners



**Goal 6: Protect land providing views and scenic vistas ("scenic resources" land)**

- Obj A: Acquire strategic parcels in this category (fee title interest or conservation easements)
- Action a: Identify and work with willing landowners

# ACQUISITIONS

## **GOAL ACQ-1: Protect land near the city limits (“urban fringe” land).**

**Objective ACQ-1A:** Acquire land (fee title interest or conservation easements) near the city limits to help define the urban boundary and provide a buffer between urban and rural land uses.

- **Action ACQ-1A.a:** Contact key landowners who own strategic parcels on the city’s urban fringe to determine interest in selling land or conservation easements. If willing sellers are found, negotiate with them to complete an acquisition.

Strategic parcels include but are not limited to parcels: (i) north of the North Davis Riparian Corridor between F Street and Highway 113, (ii) north of Wildhorse Agricultural Buffer, and (iii) west of the Stonegate neighborhood.

## **GOAL ACQ-2: Protect land between Davis and neighboring cities (“community separator” land).**

**Objective ACQ-2A:** Acquire land (fee title interest or conservation easements) between Davis and neighboring cities to preserve the unique character of each community.

- **Action ACQ-2A.a:** Contact key landowners who own strategic parcels separating Davis from nearby cities to determine interest in selling land or conservation easements. If willing sellers are found, negotiate with them to complete an acquisition.

Strategic parcels include but are not limited to parcels: (i) along the Highway 113 corridor, and (ii) along the Pole Line Road corridor between County Roads 27 and 29 and between County Roads 95 and 105.

## **GOAL ACQ-3: Protect land used for prime agriculture (“agriculture” land).**

**Objective ACQ-3A:** Acquire land (fee title interest or conservation easements) used for prime agriculture to maintain the long-term viability of agriculture in the Davis Planning Area.

- **Action ACQ-3A.a:** Contact key landowners who own strategic parcels used for prime agriculture to determine interest in selling land or conservation easements. If willing sellers are found, negotiate with them to complete an acquisition.

Strategic parcels include but are not limited to parcels that also fall within the following priority acquisition categories: (i) biological & natural resources land, (ii) scenic resources land, and (iii) community separator land.

**GOAL ACQ-4: Protect land providing important wildlife habitat (“biological & natural resources” land).**

**Objective ACQ-4A:** Acquire land (fee title interest or conservation easements) that serves as important habitat for native plants and animals.

- **Action Acq-4A.a:** Contact key landowners who own land possessing unique biological and natural resources to determine interest in selling land or conservation easements. If willing sellers are found, negotiate with them to complete an acquisition.

Strategic parcels include but are not limited to parcels: (i) connecting riparian corridor “fragments” along Putah Creek, Channel A, and Willow Slough, (ii) containing remnant rare plant communities, and (iii) containing nesting locations for burrowing owls and Swainson's hawks.

**GOAL ACQ-5: Protect open space for recreation (“public access & recreation” land).**

**Objective ACQ-5A:** Acquire open space (fee title interest or conservation easements) providing public access and recreation opportunities, including biking and hiking trails.

- **Action ACQ-5A.a:** Contact key landowners who own land providing key bike and trail connections to determine interest in selling land or conservation easements. If willing sellers are found, negotiate with them to complete an acquisition.

Strategic parcels include but are not limited to parcels: (i) connecting Davis to Woodland (i.e., along the F Street ditch), (ii) connecting Davis to Grasslands Regional Park, and (iii) along Channel A.

**GOAL ACQ-6: Protect land providing views and scenic vistas (“scenic resources” land).**

**Objective ACQ-6A:** Acquire land (fee title interest or conservation easements) providing views and scenic vistas of significant landmarks, such as nearby and distant mountain ranges.

- **Action ACQ-6A.a:** Contact key landowners who own land possessing unique scenic resources to determine interest in selling land or conservation easements. If willing sellers are found, negotiate with them to complete an acquisition.

Strategic parcels include but are not limited to parcels: (i) along County Road 98 connecting Davis to Woodland that protect vistas of coastal mountains and (ii) along Mace Boulevard near the curve that protect views to Sacramento and the Sierra Nevada.

# HABITAT RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENT

This section provides guidance to decision-makers about habitat restoration and enhancement through the year 2030. The subject area of habitat restoration and enhancement includes restoring and enhancing City-owned open space areas to make them more livable for native plant and animal species. Native plants and animals in the Central Valley are stressed by loss of habitat and habitat linkages, invasive species, loss of natural fire regimes, water pollution, human disturbances during sensitive times, and other factors. Active habitat restoration and enhancement, as well as long-term habitat management (see the *Land and Resource Management* section that follows), are essential to reducing the effects of these stressors and to increase the long-term viability of these species.

The City owns significant land that currently provides, or has the potential to provide, highly valuable and varied wildlife habitat. Some of the native plant and animal species that you might see at one of the City’s open space areas include:

- **Trees.** Boxelder, California buckeye, black walnut, sycamore, Fremont cottonwood, valley oak, red willow, yellow willow, and black willow;
- **Shrubs.** Coyote bush, mulefat, button-willow, California wild rose, California grape, and Mexican elderberry;
- **Grasses and Sedges.** Field sedge, Santa Barbara sedge, deergrass, meadow barley, blue wildrye, slender wheatgrass, creeping wildrye, wild oat, soft chess brome, rip-gut brome, and Italian ryegrass; and
- **Wildlife.** Birds-of-prey, songbirds, small- to medium-sized mammals, various amphibians, reptiles, various water fowl and wading birds, warm-water and anadromous fish species, and semi-aquatic mammals (i.e., water birds, amphibians, aquatic reptiles, hawks, owls, wood ducks, bats, woodpeckers, and mammals, including coyotes, beavers and river otters).



Figure 14: Burrowing owl at Wildhorse Ag Buffer

When planned properly, restoration and enhancement activities can also mitigate unwanted access and use of City property, like illegal camping and dumping.

## Goals, Objectives and Action Items

The goals, objectives, and action items for this section are summarized in Figure 15 on the following page and detailed in the following section:

Figure 15: Snapshot of Goals, Objectives and Action Items - Habitat Restoration and Enhancement



## **GOAL 1: Restore and enhance City-owned open space areas**

### **• Obj A: Plant more native plants and grasses**

- Action a: Budget for the supplies/staffing necessary for annual plantings
- Action b: Complete habitat restoration project at F Street and Anderson Road
- Action c: Plant native plants/grasses along Channel A, in South Fork Preserve, and along Putah Creek, if feasible
- Action d: Restore slough upstream of Covell Ditch between W. Davis and Putah Creek/Dry Slough, if feasible
- Action e: Transition walnut orchards to valley oak woodland habitat at South Fork Preserve/Wildhorse Ag Buffer

### **• Obj B: Create better wildlife habitat**

- Action a: Install habitat structures/features at South Fork Preserve and other City-owned open spaces
- Action b: Install hedgerows on City-owned ag land, if feasible
- Action c: Enhance the habitat value of key City-owned open spaces for burrowing owls, if feasible

### **• Obj C: Control invasive plants using the least toxic methods possible**

- Action a: Remove invasive plants along City-owned sections of the North Fork and South Fork of Putah Creek
- Action b: Work with key partners to secure grant funds to control invasive plants in South Fork Preserve
- Action c: Prioritize the use of non-chemical IPM techniques to control invasive plants on City-owned open spaces

### **• Obj D: Fund and monitor restoration/enhancement projects**

- Action a: Establish pilot program to provide restoration grants to third parties
- Action b: Establish a working group of the Open Space and Habitat Commission focused on restoration projects

# HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AND RESTORATION

**GOAL HRE-1: Restore and enhance City-owned open space areas to improve the natural habitat value for native plant and animal species.<sup>2</sup>**

**Objective HRE-1A:** Plant more native plants and grasses, especially but not limited to those that benefit native pollinators, on City-owned open space lands to increase biodiversity. Native plant species are those occurring within the bio-region (i.e., Lower Sacramento Valley).

- **Action HRE-1A.a:** Budget for the supplies and staffing necessary to plant additional native plants every year in City-owned open space areas.
- **Action HRE-1A.b:** Complete the habitat restoration plan for the vacant City-owned land at the intersection of F Street and Anderson Road.
- **Action HRE-1A.c:** Plant additional native plants and grasses along Channel A, in South Fork Preserve, and along Putah Creek, if feasible.
- **Action HRE-1A.d:** Restore the unnamed slough upstream of Covell Boulevard Ditch between West Davis and Putah Creek/Dry Slough, if feasible.
- **Action HRE-1A.e:** Transition old walnut orchards to valley oak woodland habitat on City-owned open space land west of South Fork Preserve (West of Mace Boulevard) and at the Wildhorse Agricultural Buffer.

**Objective HRE-1B:** Create better wildlife habitat on City-owned open spaces that satisfies basic needs (e.g., breeding, shelter, water, food, habitat connectivity, etc.) for important native animal species.

- **Action HRE-1B.a:** Install habitat features such as downed woody debris, rock piles and perches to the existing valley oak woodland habitat at South Fork Preserve and other City-owned open space areas.
- **Action HRE-1B.b:** Install hedgerows on City-owned agricultural land to enhance the habitat value of these lands, if feasible.
- **Action HRE-1B.c:** Enhance the habitat value of the Wildhorse Agricultural Buffer and other City-owned open spaces for burrowing owls, if feasible, based on consultations with local resource experts.

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<sup>2</sup> Ecological composition, structure and function all contribute to habitat value. Ecological composition refers to the total number and relative abundance of different species and habitats across the landscape. Ecological structure refers to habitat physical characteristics, such as the vertical layering (ground cover, shrubs, tree canopy) of vegetation and its horizontal coverage (within stands as well as connectivity across the landscape). Ecological function refers to active changes over time, such as food web interactions, pollination, hydrological and nutrient cycling, natural disturbances, animal migration, and seed dispersal.

**Objective HRE-1C:** Remove, and prevent re-infestations of, invasive plant species on City-owned open spaces using the least toxic methods possible.

- **Action HRE-1C.a:** Remove *Ailanthus altissima* and *Tamarix parviflora* in riparian corridors along City-owned sections of the North Fork and South Fork of Putah Creek to promote the re-establishment of native trees.
- **Action HRE-1C.b:** Work with key partners (i.e., Putah Creek Council and the Lower Putah Creek Coordinating Committee) to secure grant funds to conduct invasive species control in the riparian forest at the City’s South Fork Preserve.
- **Action HRE-1C.c:** Prioritize the use of non-chemical Integrated Pest Management techniques to control non-native plant species on City-owned open space land.

**Objective HRE-1D:** Fund and monitor restoration/enhancement projects on a regular basis on City-owned open space land.

- **Action HRE-1D.a:** Establish a pilot program that awards grants of Measure O open space parcel tax funds to qualified third parties for restoration/enhancement projects on City-owned open space land. If the pilot program is successful, continue the program, as long as staffing and financial resources are available.
- **Action HRE-1D.b:** Establish a working group of the Open Space and Habitat Commission that is specifically charged with identifying, promoting and monitoring restoration/enhancement projects on City-owned open space land.

Figure 16: Habitat restoration project on North Davis Channel

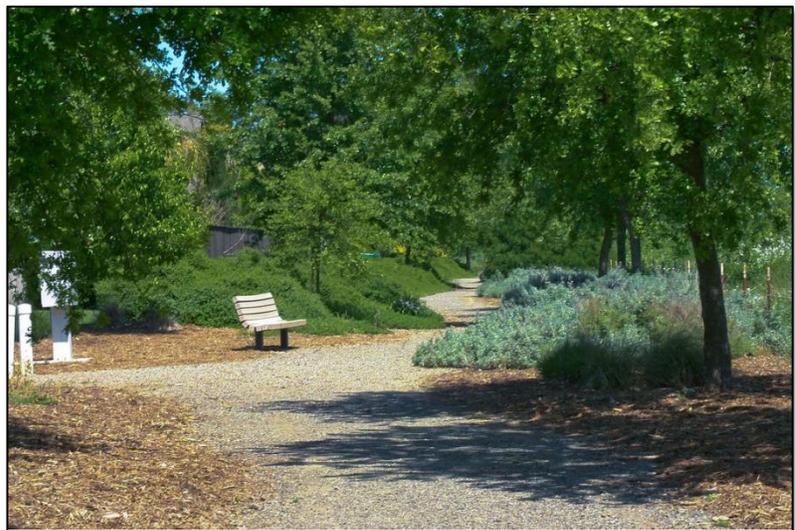


# LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

This section provides guidance to decision-makers about land and resource management through the year 2030. This subject area includes land management practices on all City-owned open spaces, including those managed for:

- Wildlife Habitat,
- Public Access, and
- Agriculture.

The City manages its open spaces for wildlife habitat, public access and agriculture. This encourages people to enjoy the City's open spaces for walking, exercise, wildlife viewing, art, photography and other passive recreation. These areas are also managed to provide high-value habitat for resident and migratory wildlife of all kinds. In order to protect the wildlife and the habitat value of these areas, the City encourages people to stay on trails and respect the site-specific rules regarding dogs.



*Figure 17: El Macero Agricultural Buffer*

In general, the City will employ a systems approach to managing its open space lands and resources. A systems approach includes consideration of how a site functions within the context of surrounding land uses as well as how the various components of a site function together. Toward that end, the City is preparing site-specific management plans for each open space property. Each plan provides context and a comprehensive management strategy that will be available for staff and interested parties. These plans will ensure continuity in management practices through changes in City personnel and leadership. To view these plans, click [here](#).

This subject area also includes goals for managing the City's leases with tenant farmers on the City's agricultural land and goals for managing conservation easements on private property.

## Goals, Objectives and Action Items

The goals, objectives, and action items for this section are summarized in Figure 18 on the following page and detailed in the following section:

Figure 18: Snapshot of Goals, Objectives and Action Items - Land and Resource Management



### **Goal 1: Manage open spaces to improve habitat value**

- **Obj A: Use long-term, data-driven land management plans for better decision-making**
  - Action a: Develop land management plans that address site-specific needs over time
  - Action b: Integrate deed restrictions into land management plans, as required
  - Action c: Budget appropriately to ensure proper implementation of land management plans
- **Obj B: Protect and improve habitat for plants and animals, using least toxic methods possible**
  - Action a: Manage open space to improve habitat for native wildlife, using least toxic methods possible
  - Action b: Manage open space to improve habitat for native plants, using least toxic methods possible
  - Action c: Manage the Wildhorse Ag Buffer to improve the habitat for burrowing owls
- **Obj C: Develop data-tracking tools to monitor habitat value and gather data to update plans**
  - Action a: Cooperate with those doing resource-related research; integrate findings into plans
  - Action b: Establish procedures for monitoring habitat value; integrate procedures into plans
  - Action c: Purchase equipment to collect and analyze data; integrate data into plans
- **Obj D: Reduce land-use conflicts (i.e., between habitat and other uses)**
  - Action a: Minimize land-use conflicts by working with key stakeholders; integrate techniques into plans



### **Goal 2: Manage open space to improve recreational value, if no harm to habitat**

- **Obj A: Develop a better understanding of how the public uses/would like to use open spaces**
  - Action a: Solicit feedback from the public about public use of open spaces; integrate findings into plans
  - Action b: Solicit feedback from peers about public use of open spaces; integrate findings into plans
- **Obj B: Allow more passive recreation uses in open space as long as they do not harm habitat**
  - Action a: Identify areas that should be off-limits to people, due to high habitat value; integrate findings into plans
  - Action b: Develop site-specific rules/regs for passive recreation activities; integrate rules/regs into plans
- **Obj C: Make sure the public's on-going use of City-owned open spaces is not harming the habitat**
  - Action a: Educate users about site-specific rules/regs, in partnership with others
  - Action b: Educate public safety personnel about the habitat that needs protecting from vandalism/camping
  - Action c: Enforce site-specific rules/regs, in partnership with law enforcement officials
  - Action d: Install signage that uses symbols to identify allowed passive recreation activities
  - Action e: Install and maintain trails, signage, and protective fencing/barriers to ensure proper site usage
  - Action f: Update rules/regs as new information becomes available (i.e., adaptive management of the public use)



### **Goal 3: Manage ag lands in a way that balances habitat and farming needs**

- **Obj A: Increase the use of sustainable land management practices on City ag land, where feasible**
  - Action a: Collaborate with tenant farmers to manage City ag land in a way that balances habitat and farming needs
  - Action b: Negotiate stronger protections for natural systems as leases come up for amendment or renewal
  - Action c: Install hedgerows to enhance the habitat value of City ag land, if feasible
- **Obj B: Increase the use of certified organic farming practices on City ag land, where feasible**
  - Action a: Implement a pilot organic farming project by leasing a small plot to an organic farmer, if feasible
  - Action b: Enforce lease for the organic farm at the Cannery; if lease ends, lease to another organic farmer, if feasible
  - Action c: Discuss with tenant farmers possibly converting City ag land to organic production; implement if feasible
  - Action d: Include the topic of organic production in negotiations for any new leases or lease amendments



### **Goal 4: Manage conservation easements consistent with program goals/documents**

- **Obj A: Develop desirable land management objectives for future conservation easements**
  - Action a: Work with land trusts/OSHC to develop land management objectives; include in future docs if possible
- **Obj B: Continue collaborative relationship with land trusts to ensure easement compliance**
  - Action a: Ensure staff read and understand the underlying conservation easement documents
  - Action b: Work with land trusts to enforce easement documents and prevent/correct any violations
  - Action c: Review annual easement monitoring reports from land trusts to ensure compliance with easement documents
  - Action d: Invite land trusts to present their annual easement monitoring reports to the OSHC once a year

# LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

## **GOAL LRM-1: Manage City-owned open spaces to improve their habitat value.**

**Objective LRM-1A:** Use long-term, data-driven management plans for all City-owned open spaces to help the City make well-informed, consistent land management decisions.

- **Action LRM-1A.a:** Develop land management plans for all City-owned open spaces that are grounded in data and address site-specific management needs, community feedback, and changing conditions over time.
- **Action LRM-1A.b:** Integrate deed restrictions into land management plans, as required in underlying land acquisition documents.
- **Action LRM-1A.c:** Budget appropriately to ensure proper implementation of land management plans.

**Objective LRM-1B:** Protect and improve the habitat value of City-owned open spaces for native plant and animal species, using the least toxic methods possible.

- **Action LRM-1B.a:** Manage City-owned open spaces to protect and enhance the habitat value of these lands for native wildlife species (i.e., birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates), with an emphasis on species interactions and ecosystem function. Use the least toxic methods possible.
- **Action LRM-1B.b:** Manage City-owned open spaces to protect and enhance the habitat value of these lands for native plant species. Native plant species are those occurring within the bio-region (i.e., Lower Sacramento Valley). Use the least toxic methods possible.
- **Action LRM-1B.c:** Manage the Wildhorse Agricultural Buffer to protect and enhance the habitat value of this land for burrowing owls, in consultation with local resource experts.

**Objective LRM-1C:** Develop data-tracking tools to monitor habitat value and compile environmental information (both historical and current) to update land management plans.

- **Action LRM-1C.a:** Cooperate with institutions, agencies, organizations, and individuals that are conducting resource-related research. Integrate findings into land management plans, as appropriate.
- **Action LRM-1C.b:** Establish protocols and procedures for monitoring vegetation and wildlife (i.e., identifying targets to monitor, the techniques to monitor them, and the tools

required to collect the desired information). Integrate protocols and procedures into land management plans, as appropriate.

- **Action LRM-1C.c:** Purchase mobile data-collecting and data-monitoring equipment (such as tablets) that can be used to collect and analyze data. Integrate data into land management plans, as appropriate.

**Objective LRM-1D:** Reduce land-use conflicts often associated with land management (i.e., between habitat and other uses).

- **Action LRM-1D.a:** Work cooperatively with key stakeholders (i.e., law enforcement officials and landowners/farmers adjacent to City open space) to minimize land-use conflicts. Integrate successful techniques into land management plans, as appropriate.

**GOAL LRM-2: Manage City-owned open spaces to improve their recreational value, without harming their habitat value.**

**Objective LRM-2A:** Develop a better understanding of how the community uses/would like to use the City's open space areas.

- **Action LRM-2A.a:** Solicit feedback from the public (i.e., groups, organizations and individuals) to better understand how the public uses/would like to use the City's open space areas. Integrate findings into land management plans, as appropriate.
- **Action LRM-2A.b:** Solicit feedback from peers (i.e., City staff, public agencies, and non-profit partners) to better understand their perceptions of how the public uses/would like to use the City's open space areas. Integrate findings into land management plans, as appropriate.

**Objective LRM-2B:** Allow more passive recreation activities on City-owned open spaces as long as they do not harm the habitat value of these lands.

- **Action LRM-2B.a:** Identify areas within City-owned open spaces that should be off-limits to people, due to their high habitat value for sensitive plant and animal species. Integrate findings into land management plans, as appropriate.
- **Action LRM-2B.b:** Develop site-specific rules and regulations for passive recreation activities. Integrate rules and regulations into land management plans, as appropriate.

**Objective LRM-2C:** Make sure the public's on-going use of City-owned open spaces is not harming the habitat value of these areas.

- **Action LRM-2C.a:** Educate users about the rules and regulations governing the City’s open space sites, working in partnership with other key stakeholders (i.e., City staff, public agencies, non-profit partners, and other outside groups and organizations).
- **Action LRM-2C.b:** Educate public safety personnel (i.e., police, fire, and first responders) about the damage vandalism and unauthorized camping can do to the natural resources at each open space site.
- **Action LRM-2C.c:** Enforce, if necessary, the rules and regulations governing the City’s open space sites, working in partnership with law enforcement personnel.
- **Action LRM-2C.d:** Install signage, printed to U.S. National Park Service standards, that uses symbols to identify allowed passive recreation activities.
- **Action LRM-2C.e:** Install and maintain trails, signage, and protective fencing/barriers to make sure the public does not enter sensitive areas and uses the open space site in accordance with the rules and regulations established for that site.
- **Action LRM-2C.f:** Update the rules and regulations established in land management plans as new information about public use becomes available (i.e., adaptive management of the public use).

**GOAL LRM-3: Manage City-owned agricultural land in a way that balances the habitat value of this land with the viability of agricultural production on this land.**

**Objective LRM-3A:** Increase the use of sustainable land management practices<sup>3</sup> on City-owned agricultural land, where feasible and in a way that doesn’t harm the economic viability of this land for agricultural production.

- **Action LRM-3A.a:** Collaborate with tenant farmers to manage City-owned agricultural land in a sustainable manner that balances protection of natural systems with the viability of agricultural production on these sites.
- **Action LRM-3A.b:** Negotiate stronger protections for natural systems as leases come up for amendment or renewal, as long as these protections are compatible with the realities of modern commercial agriculture production.

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<sup>3</sup> Sustainable land management practices include beneficial crop selection (i.e., selection of site-appropriate, pest-resistant species and varieties); diversification of crops to enhance biological and economic stability (i.e., crop rotation, cover crops); sustainable soil management practices (i.e., using cover crops, compost and/or manures, installing sediment traps, reducing tillage, avoiding traffic on wet soils, and maintaining soil cover with plants and/or mulches); efficient and humane use of inputs (i.e., maximum reliance on natural, renewable, least toxic, least energy-intensive inputs as long as they maintain productivity and profitability); and other practices, such as hedgerows, slough enhancement, vegetated drainage ditches, and vegetated filter strips (Sources: UC Davis Agricultural Sustainability Institute, Yolo Resource Conservation District).

- **Action LRM-3A.c:** Install hedgerows, where feasible, to enhance the habitat value of the City’s agricultural land.

**Objective LRM-3B:** Increase the use of certified organic farming practices on City-owned agricultural land, where feasible and in a way that doesn’t harm the economic viability of this land.

- **Action LRM-3B.a:** Implement a pilot organic farming project, if feasible, by leasing a manageable portion of City-owned agricultural land (i.e., about 25 acres) to an organic farmer. If successful, continue and expand the pilot program, if feasible.
- **Action LRM-3B.b:** Enforce the City’s lease with the Center for Land-based Learning (“CLBL”) to operate an organic farm on the City’s property at The Cannery, where a private party is paying CLBL’s cost to achieve and maintain organic certification. If the City’s lease with CLBL should end, lease the City’s farm property at The Cannery to another organic farmer, if feasible, as long as the City does not have to pay the cost of achieving and maintaining organic certification.
- **Action LRM-3B.c:** Discuss with existing tenant farmers the possibility of converting some of the City’s agricultural land to organic production. Work with them to implement the conversion to organic production, if feasible.
- **Action LRM-3B.d:** Include the topic of organic production in negotiations with new or existing tenant farmers as the City’s agricultural leases are replaced, amended and/or renewed.

**GOAL LRM-4: Manage the conservation easements the City owns on private property consistent with the City’s open space goals and the underlying easement documents.**

**Objective LRM-4A:** Develop a set of desirable land management objectives for future conservation easements that encourage the fulfillment of multiple goals under the City’s Open Space Program.

- **Action LRM-4A.a:** Collaborate with the Yolo Land Trust, the Solano Land Trust, and the Open Space and Habitat Commission to develop a set of desirable land management objectives for future conservation easements. Work with the Yolo Land Trust and the Solano Land Trust to incorporate as many of these desirable land management objectives as possible into future conservation easement documents.

**Objective LRM-4B:** Continue the City’s collaborative relationship with the Yolo Land Trust and the Solano Land Trust to ensure that all private property subject to a City-owned conservation easement is being managed by the private landowners consistent with the underlying easement documents.

- **Action LRM-4B.a:** Ensure that key staff of the City’s Open Space Program read and understand the underlying conservation easement documents.
- **Action LRM-4B.b:** Collaborate with the Yolo Land Trust and the Solano Land Trust to enforce the underlying conservation easement documents, and prevent and/or correct any violations of these underlying conservation easement documents.
- **Action LRM-4B.c:** Review the annual conservation easement monitoring reports from the Yolo Land Trust and the Solano Land Trust to ensure private landowners are managing lands consistent with those conservation easements.
- **Action LRM-4B.d:** Invite both the Yolo Land Trust and the Solano Land Trust once a year in the fall to present a summary of its annual conservation easement monitoring reports to the Open Space and Habitat Commission to keep the Commission apprised of its easement monitoring work.



*Figure 19: Equestrians and pedestrians enjoying Wildhorse Ag Buffer*

## **PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION**

This section provides guidance to decision-makers about public access and recreation in the City’s open space areas through the year 2030. Davis residents and visitors greatly value having access to passive recreational opportunities in open space areas. Providing that access helps taxpayers appreciate the benefits of their investment and fosters strong support for continued open space conservation. The subject area of public access and recreation includes increasing public access and recreational opportunities on the City’s open space areas and on the City’s conservation easement lands, where feasible. It also includes building a better open space network, and improving linkages between open space areas.

The community has expressed a great interest in being able to hike more within the City’s open space areas. Residents also have expressed a great interest in being able to visit various publicly owned open space areas by bike. Ideally, the publicly owned open spaces within the Davis Planning Area should be connected by biking/walking trails, allowing people to visit multiple sites without having to get into a car. Currently, many of the City’s open space areas are publicly accessible, but trail systems are limited and open space areas aren’t linked by dedicated bike paths.



*Figure 20: Bicyclists on Putah Creek Parkway*

### **Goals, Objectives and Action Items**

The goals, objectives, and action items for this section are summarized in Figure 21 on the following page and detailed in the following section:

Figure 21: Snapshot of Goals, Objectives and Action Items - Public Access and Recreation



**Goal 1: Provide better public access/rec opportunities on City fee title land**

- **Obj A: Increase the availability of formal hiking trails within City fee title open space**
  - Action a: Complete hiking trail improvements within South Fork Preserve
  - Action b: Complete hiking trail improvements within the 10 acres west of South Fork Preserve
  - Action c: Complete hiking trail improvements on new open space at F Street and Anderson Road
  - Action d: Complete hiking trail improvements on any new open space lands the City acquires in the future
- **Obj B: Increase the availability of passive rec opportunities within City fee title open space**
  - Action a: Install new and improved interpretive panels highlighting the open space's unique attributes
  - Action b: Install new and improved seating areas inspired by the natural environment
  - Action c: Install new and improved signage to better educate visitors about the site itself and proper site usage
- **Obj C: Provide public access & rec opportunities as part of habitat restoration projects**
  - Action a: Ensure selection criteria for habitat restoration grants includes a project's ability to improve public access
  - Action b: Encourage OSHC to help build community support for habitat restoration projects improving public access



**Goal 2: Provide better public access/rec opportunities on City easement land**

- **Obj A: Take advantage of public access & rec opportunities allowed under existing easements**
  - Action a: Organize regular and on-going docent-led tours on easement lands, where allowed
- **Obj B: Make sure new easement acquisitions consider public access & rec opportunities**
  - Action a: Negotiate as much public accessibility as possible on any new purchases of easements



**Goal 3: Expand network of linkages between publicly owned open spaces**

- **Obj A: Increase the number of safe bike/ped connections between publicly owned open spaces**
  - Action a: Work with property owners to connect the levee system to publicly owned open spaces
  - Action b: Work with property owners to install bike/ped paths between City and Grasslands Regional Park
  - Action c: Work with property owners to install bike/ped paths between City and Willow Slough Bypass
  - Action d: Work with property owners to install bike/ped paths between City and City of Woodland
  - Action e: Work with property owners to install bike/ped paths along Channel A
  - Action f: Work with property owners to install bike/ped paths along South Fork of Putah Creek
  - Action g: Link, if feasible, the City open space at F and Anderson to other City open space

# PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECREATION

**GOAL PAR-1: Provide better public access and recreational opportunities in open space the City owns in fee title.**

**Objective PAR-1A:** Increase the availability of formal hiking trails within open space the City owns in fee title.

- **Action PAR-1A.a:** Complete hiking trail improvements at South Fork Preserve to enhance the walking experience and allow visitors (including people with disabilities) to experience all of the preserve’s natural habitats, including the riparian corridor.
- **Action PAR-1A.b:** Complete hiking trail improvements on the 10 acres west of South Fork Preserve to enhance the walking experience and allow visitors (including people with disabilities) to experience this property’s rich riparian corridor. Apply for grant funding to implement this project.
- **Action PAR-1A.c:** Complete hiking trail improvements on the three acres located at the intersection of F Street and Anderson Road to create a new publicly accessible open space with a hiking trail.
- **Action PAR-1A.d:** Complete hiking trail improvements on any new open space lands the City acquires in the future, whenever feasible and appropriate. Apply for grant funding to implement these projects.

**Objective PAR-1B:** Increase the availability of passive recreational improvements (i.e., interpretive panels, seating areas, site signage) within open space the City owns in fee title.

- **Action PAR-1B.a:** Install new and improved interpretive panels to educate the public about the open space’s unique natural attributes (i.e., historical and biological) and its contribution to the regional ecosystem.
- **Action PAR-1B.b:** Install new and improved seating areas inspired by the natural environment (i.e., tree rounds, logs) to allow visitors to rest and reflect.
- **Action PAR-1B.c:** Install new and improved site signage to better educate visitors about the site itself and proper site usage (i.e., site map, self-guided tour information, site environmental information, and site rules and regulations).

**Objective PAR-1C:** Provide public access and recreational opportunities as part of City-funded habitat restoration projects, where feasible and appropriate.

- **Action PAR-1C.a:** Make sure the selection criteria for habitat restoration grants using City funds includes a proposed project’s ability to improve and/or provide public access and recreational opportunities.
- **Action PAR-1C.b:** Encourage members of the Open Space and Habitat Commission to help build community support for new and/or improved public access and recreational opportunities being considered as part of City-funded habitat restoration projects.

**GOAL PAR-2: Provide better public access and recreational opportunities in open space under conservation easements the City owns (where allowed).**

**Objective PAR-2A:** Take advantage of public access and recreational opportunities already allowed under existing conservation easements.

- **Action PAR-2A.a:** Organize regular and on-going docent-led tours of riparian corridors located on conservation easements along Dry Slough and Willow Slough, as allowed under the existing underlying conservation easement documents between the City and the private property owner.

**Objective PAR-2B:** Make sure City-funded acquisitions of conservation easements (both habitat and agricultural easements) consider options for improving and/or providing public access and recreational opportunities, where appropriate.

- **Action PAR-2B.a:** Negotiate as much public accessibility as possible on any new purchases of agricultural and/or habitat conservation easements.

**GOAL PAR-3: Improve and expand on the network of bike and walking trails that link publicly owned open space lands.**

**Objective PAR-3A:** Increase the number of safe bike and pedestrian connections between publicly owned open space lands within the Davis Planning Area.

- **Action PAR-3A.a:** Work with the State Department of Water Resources and the Central Valley Flood Control District to open the levee system to the public for walking, running, and biking linkages to the City’s open space lands. If feasible, implement this project.
- **Action PAR-3A.b:** Work with Yolo County to complete a Class I bike loop in the County’s right-of-way that runs from the City of Davis’s city limits along County Road 104 past the City’s South Fork Preserve to Yolo County’s Grasslands Regional Park and back again. If feasible, implement this project.
- **Action PAR-3A.c:** Work with property owners to connect Willow Slough Bypass to the City of Davis by biking/walking trails. If feasible, implement this project.

- **Action PAR-3A.d:** Work with property owners to connect the City of Davis to the City of Woodland via walking/biking paths along F Street (i.e., the F Street Ditch). If feasible, implement this project.
- **Action PAR-3A.e:** Work with property owners to install walking/biking paths along Channel A. If feasible, implement this project.
- **Action PAR-3A.f:** Work with property owners to install walking/biking paths along the South Fork of Putah Creek between the City’s South Fork Preserve and the Putah Creek riparian corridor lands owned by the Regents of the University of California. If feasible, implement this project.
- **Action PAR-3A.g:** Link the City-owned open space site at the intersection of F Street and Anderson Road to other City-owned open space along the eastern and southern edges of Julie Partansky Pond to create a new publicly accessible open space with a hiking trail. If feasible, implement this project.



*Figure 22: Hiker on Wildhorse Agricultural Buffer*

# FINANCIAL AND PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY

This section provides guidance to decision-makers about financial and program accountability through the year 2030. The subject area of financial and program accountability includes creating an open, consistent and objective decision-making process and providing more information to the public about program budgets and financing tools.

The money to run the Open Space Program comes from several different sources:

1. The City’s General Fund,
2. The Open Space Protection Special Tax Fund (the Measure O Fund),
3. Agriculture mitigation fees, and
4. Development impact fees for open space.

Currently, the City’s annual budget reports these funds separately so it is difficult to determine the overall budget for the Open Space Program. This lack of clarity has led to public confusion and frustration about the Open Space Program budget and what Measure O funds are being spent on year to year. A background report that explains how Measure O funds were spent during the period 2000-2015 can be found by clicking [here](#).



Figure 23: Davis Wetlands

Clearly, more transparency about the Open Space Program budget needs to occur to provide more financial accountability and foster more trust and understanding between the community, the City Council, and City staff.

Toward that end, City Open Space staff has prepared an easy-to-read budget summary that provides a snapshot of the Open Space Program budget. To view this document, go to the [open space pages](#) on the City’s website.

## Goals, Objectives and Action Items

The goals, objectives, and action items for this section are summarized in Figure 24 on the following page and detailed in the following section:

Figure 24: Snapshot of Goals, Objectives and Action Items - Financial and Program Accountability



### **Goal 1: Conduct program activities in an open, consistent, objective way**

- **Obj A: Rely on written documents to guide and clarify program activities**
  - Action a: Prepare a strategic plan to guide/clarify future decision-making about program activities through 2030
  - Action b: Prepare implementation plans to focus efforts on implementing the strategic plan in five-year increments
  - Action c: Prepare grant guidelines for third parties seeking City funding for habitat restoration projects on City land
  - Action d: Prepare land management plans for all the City's open space sites
  - Action e: Prepare a spreadsheet summarizing the annual program budget
  - Action f: Prepare a spreadsheet summarizing all Measure O revenues and expenditures since 2000
  - Action g: Prepare an inventory of open space sites that includes key basic site information; link to interactive map
- **Obj B: Be transparent about program activities**
  - Action a: Post on the City's website the written documents that guide and clarify program activities
  - Action b: Post on the City's website regular updates and newsworthy items about program activities
  - Action c: Report regularly to the City Council about program activities; post reports on City's website
  - Action d: Report regularly to the OSHC about program activities; post reports on City's website
- **Obj C: Manage program activities to ensure accountability and operational efficiencies**
  - Action a: Concentrate the management of program activities (including the Measure O fund) in one department
  - Action b: Designate one employee with responsibility to manage program activities (including the Measure O fund)
  - Action c: Research and implement, if feasible, relevant "best practices" used at local open space districts



### **Goal 2: Diversify program funding sources to reduce reliance on general fund**

- **Obj A: Identify and secure new internal funding sources**
  - Action a: Use a percentage of the City's agricultural lease revenue as a way to finance program activities, if feasible
  - Action b: Sell some City ag land subject to a conservation easement as a way to finance program activities, if feasible
  - Action c: Identify and secure other possible internal funding sources as a way to finance program activities
- **Obj B: Identify and secure new external funding sources**
  - Action a: Apply for as many state/fed grants as possible, given staff resources, as a way to finance program activities
  - Action b: Identify and secure other possible external funding sources as a way to finance program activities

# FINANCIAL AND PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY

**GOAL FPA-1: Conduct program activities using an open, consistent, and objective decision-making process.**

**Objective FPA-1A:** Rely on written documents to guide and clarify program activities.

- **Action FPA-1A.a:** Prepare a strategic plan for the City’s Open Space Program which will guide and clarify future decision-making about how the City acquires, restores and manages open space through 2030.
- **Action FPA-1A.b:** Prepare implementation plans that will focus the City’s efforts on implementing the strategic plan in five-year increments.
- **Action FPA-1A.c:** Prepare grant guidelines for third parties seeking City funding for habitat restoration projects on City-owned open space sites.
- **Action FPA-1A.d:** Prepare land management plans for all the City’s open space sites.
- **Action FPA-1A.e:** Prepare a brief, easy-to-understand spreadsheet summarizing the annual budget for the City’s Open Space Program.
- **Action FPA-1A.f:** Prepare a brief, easy-to-understand spreadsheet summarizing all revenues and expenditures that have flowed through the Measure O open space parcel tax fund since 2000, the year Measure O was passed by Davis voters.
- **Action FPA-1A.g:** Prepare an inventory of the City’s open space sites that includes key basic information (i.e., site size and location, site amenities, directions, public accessibility information, features, unique plant and animal species, and trail systems). Link this inventory to an interactive map so users can see where these sites are located.

**Objective FPA-1B:** Be transparent about program activities.

- **Action FPA 1B.a:** Post on the City’s website the written documents that guide and clarify program activities (i.e., the strategic plan, implementation plans, grant guidelines, land management plans, budget spreadsheet, Measure O spreadsheet, and open space inventory/interactive map).
- **Action FPA-1B.b:** Post on the City’s website regular updates and newsworthy items to keep the community informed about program activities and accomplishments.
- **Action FPA-1B.c:** Report regularly to the City Council about program activities, including how Measure O funds are being spent, program accomplishments, planned

activities for the coming year, and program challenges and needs. Post these reports on the City’s website (in the form of staff reports).

- **Action FPA-1B.d:** Report regularly to the Open Space and Habitat Commission about program activities, including how Measure O funds are spent, the upcoming annual program budget, planned activities for the coming year, and program accomplishments and challenges. Post these reports on the City’s website (in the form of meeting minutes).

**Objective FPA-1C:** Manage program activities in a way that maximizes accountability and operational efficiencies, specifically governance of the Measure O fund.

- **Action FPA-1C.a:** Concentrate the management of program activities (including the Measure O fund) in the Community Development and Sustainability Department.
- **Action FPA-1C.b:** Designate the City’s Open Space Program Manager, who resides in the Community Development and Sustainability Department, as the sole person responsible for managing program activities (including the Measure O fund).
- **Action FPA-1C.c:** Research and implement, if feasible, relevant “best practices” used at local open space districts.

**GOAL FPA-2: Diversify program funding sources so that program activities are less reliant on the general fund.**

**Objective FPA-2A:** Identify and secure new internal funding sources

- **Action FPA-2A.a:** Use a percentage of the City’s agricultural lease revenue as a way to finance program activities, if feasible.
- **Action FPA-2A.b:** Sell some of the City’s agricultural land subject to a conservation easement as a way to finance program activities, if feasible.
- **Action FPA-2A.c:** Identify and secure other possible internal funding sources as a way to finance program activities.

**Objective FPA-2B:** Identify and secure new external funding sources

- **Action FPA-2B.a:** Apply for as many state and federal grants as possible, given staff resources, as a way to finance program activities.
- **Action FPA-2B.b:** Identify and secure other possible external funding sources as a way to finance program activities.

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

This section provides guidance to decision-makers about public engagement and partnerships through the year 2030. The subject area of public engagement and partnerships includes:

1. Engaging the public in the City’s Open Space Program and at its open space sites, and
2. Developing and fostering partnerships with other interested and involved parties to achieve the City’s Open Space Program goals.

Increasing the level of public engagement in the City’s Open Space Program and at the City’s open space sites themselves is an effective way to build community and increase understanding and awareness of the City’s unique open space areas and of the program in general.



Figure 25: Volunteers doing restoration work on Putah Creek Parkway

## Goals, Objectives and Action Items

The goals, objectives, and action items for this section are summarized in Figure 26 on the following page and detailed in the following section:

Figure 26: Snapshot of Goals, Objectives and Action Items - Public Engagement and Partnerships



### **Goal 1: Get more people involved in the City's Open Space Program**

- **Obj A: Use community organizing/outreach to increase engagement in the program**
  - Action a: Organize a public workshop and develop an on-line survey every five years
  - Action b: Encourage the OSHC to be "active ambassadors" in the community for the program
  - Action c: Outreach to potential new volunteer recruits at community events
- **Obj B: Use technology to increase engagement in the program**
  - Action a: Create a mechanism on the City's website to allow the public to submit comments/questions to staff
  - Action b: Create a mechanism on the City's website to allow staff to share real-time information with the public



### **Goal 2: Get more people involved at the City's open space sites**

- **Obj A: Use community organizing/outreach to increase engagement at the sites**
  - Action a: Organize as many community events as possible at the City's open space sites
  - Action b: Outreach to the arts community to develop an "art-in-open-spaces" program
  - Action c: Encourage the OSHC to help staff organize "friends of" community groups to help with maintenance
  - Action d: Outreach to potential new users by installing new and improved locational signage around the City
- **Obj B: Use technology to increase engagement at the sites**
  - Action a: Revamp and update the interactive open space map on the City's website
  - Action b: Create, if feasible, a smartphone application that gives site visitors easy access to website information



### **Goal 3: Integrate partnerships into program activities**

- **Obj A: Increase the number of partnerships with people inside the City**
  - Action a: Partner with the City's Parks and Recreation Department to create better habitat in parks/greenbelts
  - Action b: Partner with the City's Public Works Department to create better habitat/public access in channels/basins
  - Action c: Set up working group with all City land managers to improve land management practices & communication
- **Obj B: Increase the number of partnerships with people outside the City**
  - Action a: Partner with U.C. Davis to implement priority open space projects of common interest
  - Action b: Partner with the Yolo Habitat Conservancy to complete open space acquisitions related to the HCP/NCCP
  - Action c: Partner with local land trusts/brokers to stay active in the market and complete open space acquisitions
  - Action d: Partner with key entities who can help the City maintain its open spaces

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

## GOAL PEP-1: Get more people involved in the City's Open Space Program.

**Objective PEP-1A:** Use community organizing/outreach as a way to increase public engagement in the City's Open Space Program.

- **Action PEP-1A.a:** Organize a public workshop and develop an on-line survey every five years to collect feedback from the community about program activities.
- **Action PEP-1A.b:** Encourage members of the Open Space and Habitat Commission to be "active ambassadors" in the community for the City's Open Space Program.
- **Action PEP-1A.c:** Outreach to potential new volunteer recruits at community events, such as the Davis Farmers Market and the City's "Community Day of Service."

**Objective PEP-1B:** Use technology as a way to increase public engagement in the City's Open Space Program.

- **Action PEP-1B.a:** Create a mechanism on the City's website/social media sites to allow the public to leave comments and/or ask questions about the City's Open Space Program.
- **Action PEP-1B.b:** Create a mechanism on the City's website/social media sites to allow staff to share real-time information (i.e., photos, plant and animal sightings, and short stories) about the City's Open Space Program.

## GOAL PEP-2: Get more people involved at the City's open space sites.

**Objective PEP-2A:** Use community organizing/outreach as a way to increase public engagement at the City's open space sites.

- **Action PEP-2A.a:** Organize as many public events as possible at the City's open space sites (i.e., staff-led tours, volunteer days, field trips, scientific research efforts, academic field studies, and other educational events/workshops).
- **Action PEP-2A.b:** Outreach to the arts community to develop an "art-in-open-spaces" program as a way to attract new users to the City's open space sites.
- **Action PEP-2A.c:** Encourage members of the Open Space and Habitat Commission to help staff organize "friends of" community groups to help maintain open space sites.
- **Action PEP-2A.d:** Outreach to potential new users by installing new and improved locational signage at strategic locations around the City to better publicize the location of the City's open space sites.

**Objective PEP-2B:** Use technology as a way to increase public engagement at the City’s open space sites.

- **Action PEP-2B.a:** Revamp and update the interactive open space map on the City’s website to provide the public with better information about the City’s open space sites.
- **Action PEP-2B.b:** Create, if feasible, a smartphone application that would allow visitors to the City’s open space sites to easily access site information from the City’s website (i.e., the use of Quick Response (“QR”) codes).

**GOAL PEP-3: Integrate partnerships into program activities.**

**Objective PEP-3A:** Increase the number of partnerships with people inside the City.

- **Action PEP-3A.a:** Partner with the City’s Parks and Recreation Department to create better habitat in the City’s parks and greenbelts.
- **Action PEP-3A.b:** Partner with the City’s Public Works department to create better habitat and public access along the City’s stormwater detention channels and in its stormwater detention basins.
- **Action PEP-3A.c:** Establish a working group with other City land managers (i.e., in the Parks and Recreation and Public Works departments) to share effective land management techniques, resolve conflicts and inefficiencies, and improve inter-departmental communication and cooperation.

**Objective PEP-3B:** Increase the number of partnerships with people outside the City.

- **Action PEP-3B.a:** Partner with U.C. Davis to implement priority open space projects of common interest.
- **Action PEP-3B.b:** Partner with the Yolo Habitat Conservancy to complete open space acquisitions (fee title or easement) related to the Yolo Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Plan (“HCP/NCCP”).
- **Action PEP-3B.c:** Partner with local land trusts and land brokers to stay active in the market and complete open space acquisitions (fee title or easement).
- **Action LRM-3B.d:** Partner with key entities (i.e., governmental agencies, conservation organizations, and volunteers) who can help the City maintain its open spaces. Integrate successful partnerships into land management plans, as appropriate.

## MEASURING SUCCESS

Every five years, the City will develop a five-year implementation plan based on the goals, objectives and action items included in this Strategic Plan to guide its efforts during the five-year periods of 2017-2021, 2022-2026, and 2027-2031. Progress reports on these five-year implementation plans will be given monthly at the Open Space and Habitat Commission and annually at the City Council. At these public meetings, the community will be able to assess progress in each of the Strategic Plan's six specific categories: (1) Acquisitions, (2) Habitat Restoration and Enhancement, (3) Land and Resource Management, (4) Public Access and Recreation, (5) Financial and Program Accountability, and (6) Public Engagement and Partnerships. These ongoing assessments will seek to answer two important questions:

- Is the City accomplishing the action items set forth in this Strategic Plan?
- Have the successfully completed action items led to accomplishing the goals and objectives set forth in this Strategic Plan?

The City's most recent five-year implementation plan can be found on the [open space pages](#) on the City's website.

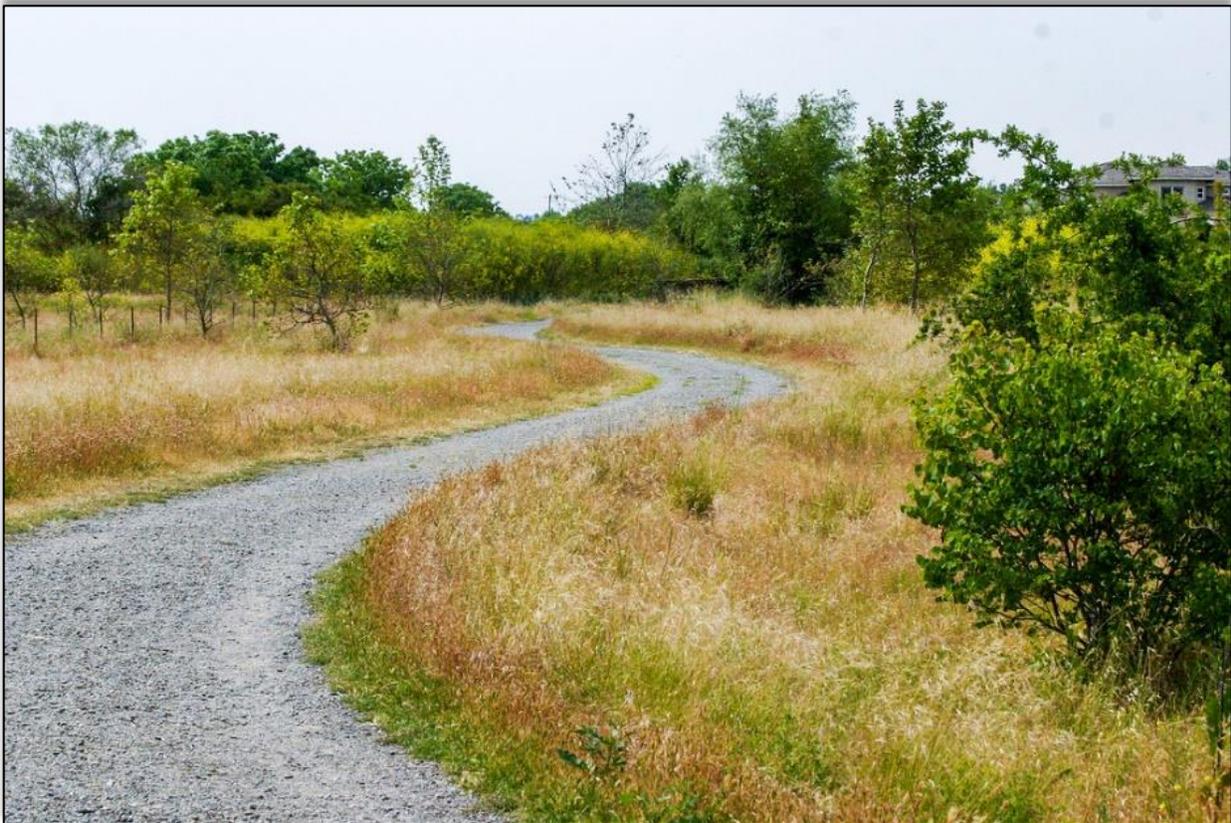


Figure 27: Meandering Path at Wildhorse Ag Buffer

# **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A: Decision-Making Process for Land Acquisitions

## **Appendix A**

### **Decision-Making Process for Land Acquisitions**

This appendix provides a summary of the decision-making process that will be followed by the City before a land acquisition (either fee title or conservation easement) occurs as part of the City's effort to further the goals of the Open Space Program.

The goal of this appendix is to provide decision-makers with an objective open space property evaluation system. It establishes the framework for a consistent, objective, and open acquisition process. The implementation of this process will enable staff, advisory bodies, and decision-makers to clearly understand their respective roles in a typical open space transaction. Providing an open process with opportunities for public participation helps garner community support for both the individual transaction and the program as a whole.

This appendix seeks to answer five basic questions:

1. What are the principles that will guide the City's acquisition decisions?
2. What types/categories of land will the City purchase/protect?
3. How will the City find out about potential acquisitions?
4. How will the City evaluate potential acquisitions?
5. What is the process for acquiring/protecting open space?

### **What are the Principles that will Guide the City's Acquisition Decisions?**

The City carries out its open space protection goals by setting policy and acquiring conservation easements and ownership of land from willing sellers. The City is committed to an approach that maximizes preservation of open space lands and resources. An effective, direct, and equitable method of doing so is to purchase protection (easements and fee-title interest) at a fair market price from willing sellers. Several fundamental principles will guide all acquisitions by the City:

1. *Acquire Land From Willing Sellers Only.* Acquire open space from willing sellers only.<sup>4</sup>
2. *Acquire Land Within Davis Planning Area Only.* Lands or resources must be located within the Davis Planning Area to qualify for acquisition or management by the City.
3. *Stretch the Dollar.* Acquire and hold the least interest in a property necessary to carry out the City's General Plan goals for open space protection. This means the City will be limiting its fee title acquisitions and focusing on conservation easements.
4. *Favor Conservation Easements.* Use conservation easements as the primary method of open space protection. Purchasing only part of a property's rights (such as development rights) protects land at a fraction of the cost of purchasing all the rights (fee title interest), thereby maximizing the acreage that can be brought into the City's Open Space Program. Conservation easements shall be held in perpetuity.

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<sup>4</sup> In rare instances it may be advantageous for a property owner to request condemnation of property by the City. Condemnation will not be used by the City to acquire open space unless requested by the landowner.

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5. *Make Strategic Fee-Title Acquisitions.* Acquire and hold fee-title to properties where protection of unique resources, restoration, or public access is desired.
6. *Pay Fair Market Value.* Acquire land at no more than fair market value, based on a professional appraisal.
7. *Take a Balanced Approach.* Balance efforts to protect natural resources with efforts to maintain agricultural production in the Davis Planning Area.
8. *Seek Multiple Benefits.* Seek protection of open space lands that overlap multiple acquisition categories.

The City seeks to protect the greatest amount of high quality open space land and resources as possible within its funding constraints. *However, despite remarkable community willingness to pay for open space protection, all undeveloped land and sensitive resources in the Davis Planning Area cannot be protected due to high land costs and multiple competing uses for the land.* In order to maximize the effectiveness of available funding, the City will use the most cost-effective open space protection tools (e.g., conservation easements) and seek to acquire open space that serves to buffer other lands from threat of conversion.

### **What Types/Categories of Land Will the City Purchase/Protect?**

Acquisition categories identify the various types of open space lands and resources identified by the City for protection. These categories help organize the City's acquisition priorities by identifying the land and resource values that are desirable to the community. They are (in no order of importance):

- *Urban Fringe:* Protect land near the city limits to help define the urban limits of Davis and provide an adequate buffer between urban and rural land uses.
- *Community Separator:* Protect land between Davis and neighboring cities to preserve the unique character of each community.
- *Agriculture:* Protect prime agricultural lands and sustainable farming practices (e.g., organic agriculture) to maintain the long-term viability of agriculture in the Davis Planning Area.
- *Biological and Natural Resources:* Protect important wildlife habitat (including land that can be restored/enhanced to provide additional wildlife habitat), sensitive species, and other significant natural resources.

## **Appendix A Decision-Making Process for Land Acquisitions**

- *Scenic Resources*: Protect land providing views and scenic vistas of significant landmarks, such as nearby and distant mountain ranges.

### **How will the City Find out About Potential Acquisitions?**

The City will use various methods to find out about potential open space land acquisitions. The methods listed below are just some of the actions the City will take to find out about possible open space land acquisitions:

- Contact key landowners, either directly or indirectly through land trusts and/or brokers, to inform them about the Open Space Program and determine interest in selling land or easements in the targeted key priority acquisition areas outlined in the 2030 Strategic Plan.
- Partner with the Yolo Habitat Conservancy to complete open space acquisitions (fee title or easement) related to the Yolo Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Communities Conservation Plan, more commonly called the Yolo HCP/NCCP.
- Partner with local land trusts and land brokers to stay active in the market and complete open space acquisitions (fee title or easement acquisitions).

### **How will the City Evaluate Potential Acquisitions?**

The following list illustrates some of the key considerations the City may discuss when thinking about acquiring an open space property or conservation easement. These considerations are not intended to limit the discussion of the positive or negative attributes of a proposed acquisition by the City. Instead, they should be used to assist in the analysis of whether a particular parcel or resource should be protected by the City. The following considerations should not be considered static and should be modified to address changing conditions and unique circumstances:

#### ***Location and Size Considerations***

For potential acquisitions under the Urban Fringe, Agriculture and Scenic Resources categories, considering the site's location is more critical than its size. For potential acquisitions under the Community Separator, Agriculture, and Biological & Natural Resources categories, considering the site's size is more critical than the site's location. Some of the key questions that should be discussed during the site evaluation process include:

- Is the site within the probable path of development?
- Will acquiring this site increase the possibility of creating an open space "island" (i.e., a small open space area surrounded by urban development)?
- Is the site considered prime farmland?
- Does the site provide uninterrupted views of significant local and regional landmarks?

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- Will the protection of this site help to protect other open space in the same area?
- Is the site large enough to sustain typical agricultural operations?
- What is the site's soil quality and overall agricultural production potential/value?
- Is the site large enough to provide useable habitat for plant and animal species?
- What are the surrounding land uses and will they be compatible with the use of the protected open space in the future?

#### ***Connectivity and Adjacency Considerations***

For potential acquisitions under all acquisition categories, considering the site's ability to connect/link other existing open space areas and the site's location adjacent to other existing open space areas is critical. Some of the key questions that should be discussed during the site evaluation process include:

- Does the site link together, or help to link together, existing protected open spaces?
- Does the site increase the size of existing protected open spaces?
- Will the site's protection contribute significantly to the protection of other high priority open space lands or resources?

#### ***Relative Risk of Conversion Considerations***

For potential acquisitions under all acquisition categories, considering the site's relative risk of being converted to urban uses in the short- and mid-term is critical. Some of the key questions that should be discussed during the site evaluation process include:

- What is the site's zoning?
- What is the status of the site's Williamson Act contract?
- Is the site already served by critical infrastructure, such as roads and utilities?

#### ***Relative Scarcity Considerations***

For potential acquisitions under the Urban Fringe, Scenic Resources, and Biological & Natural Resources categories, considering the site's relative scarcity is critical. Some of the key questions that should be discussed during the site evaluation process include:

- Is the site in a scarce land use category and therefore more important to protect?
- Will this site provide additional opportunities for public access and recreation (e.g., hiking, biking, wildlife viewing, etc.) that are currently in scarce supply?
- Is the site's land use type in general decline in the Davis Planning Area?
- How much of this land use type is already protected as open space?
- Does this site support sensitive species?

## **Appendix A Decision-Making Process for Land Acquisitions**

### ***Biodiversity Considerations***

For potential acquisitions under the Biological & Natural Resources category, considering the site's ecological value and biodiversity are critical. Some of the key questions that should be discussed during the site evaluation process include:

- Does the site have a variety of habitat types?
- Does the site currently have (or did it historically have) riparian, upland, and wetland habitats?
- What is the site's ecological value (e.g., unique habitat, species diversity, protection of listed species or species in local decline, etc.)?

### ***Land Management Considerations***

For potential acquisitions under all acquisition categories, considering how the site can and should be managed in perpetuity is critical. Some of the key questions that should be discussed during the site evaluation process include:

For fee title properties:

- Can the land be acquired with reasonable effort in relation to its cost?
- Does the site have any title issues, boundary disputes, or pending legal actions?
- Does the City have the human and financial resources to manage the site appropriately in perpetuity?

For easement properties:

- Can the easement be acquired with reasonable effort in relation to its cost?
- Does the site have any title issues, boundary disputes, or pending legal actions?
- Will the landowner commit to furthering the conservation goals of the site (i.e., sustainable farming practices, voluntary protection of sensitive natural resources, etc.)?
- Is the landowner insisting on provisions in the easement that would diminish the property's conservation values?
- Are the human and financial resources in place to enforce and monitor the easement in perpetuity?

### **What is the Process for Acquiring/Protecting Open Space?**

This section of the appendix is intended to guide the City in a typical open space land acquisition. Though there are numerous intermediate steps and each acquisition is unique, the following outline of the steps involved in a typical land transaction illustrates the critical decision points and opportunities for public input. A typical land acquisition includes the following general steps, after a parcel has been identified for acquisition:

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1. Make contact with the property owner(s) or broker(s) to discuss possible acquisition of fee title interest or conservation easement.
2. Request a “letter of interest” from the landowner(s), if necessary, that states the landowner(s) interest in discussing a possible acquisition and allows City staff/representatives to do a property evaluation and site visit.
3. Complete a preliminary property evaluation, which includes a property description, an initial analysis of the property’s consistency with the goals of the Open Space Program, and possible acquisition funding sources.
4. Present the preliminary property evaluation to the Open Space and Habitat Commission for discussion and direction on appropriate next steps (public input opportunity). Work with the Commission’s working group on acquisitions to refine the preliminary property evaluation if necessary.
5. Discuss the potential acquisition opportunity with the City Council in closed session to get direction from the City Council on appropriate next steps.

If direction is given from the City Council to proceed, the following steps are necessary:

1. Hire professionals to complete appraisal, environmental site assessment, title reports, and other pertinent documents and information.
2. Hire professionals to complete required analysis under the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”).
3. Negotiate terms/draft transactional documents for acquisition of fee title interest or conservation easement, whichever is applicable. Discuss the status of negotiations with the City Council in closed session, if necessary. Keep the Open Space and Habitat Commission informed of the status of negotiations (public input opportunity).
4. Present the final terms of the transaction to the Open Space and Habitat Commission for recommended action on transaction (public input opportunity).
5. Present the final terms of the transaction to the City Council for recommended action on transaction and budget approval (public input opportunity).

If direction is given from the City Council to proceed, staff will work to execute the transaction documents and complete the acquisition.

The acquisition process outlined above provides an overview of a typical open space land transaction. However, the City Council may modify the process in exceptional cases (subject to legal requirements) where there is a high risk of loss without accelerated action by the City.