

Introduction

The Environmental Resource Management Element (ERME) identifies environmental resources within the City and establishes a plan for their conservation, management, and preservation. The ERME promotes the management of natural resources to prevent their neglect, destruction, or disturbance. The Element establishes a long-range program for the preservation of open space areas in the City and for the provision of recreation areas and facilities to serve the needs of residents. The Element also includes an inventory of both public and private open space and a plan for continued protection of these areas.

The ERME combines the mandated Conservation and Open Space Elements. No gravel or aggregate resources exist within the City so as to require compliance with Section 65302 (d) and (e) of the California Government Code and the State Mining Reclamation Act. This Element addresses conservation issues to increase awareness of the presence and condition of natural and cultural resources and to promote the advantages of conservation and management through its goals and policies. Conservation includes the use of resources. The City's conservation plan consists of independent programs for the managed use of oil resources, the conservation of groundwater, preservation of hillsides, protection of scenic corridors, and the protection of native plant and animal life. The plan will help maintain ecological balance and improve the quality of life in La Habra Heights. Further, the plan calls for protection of those resources somewhat unique to La Habra Heights: dark skies, scenic views, and wildlife habitat.

Open space refers to unimproved land or water devoted to the preservation of natural resources for outdoor recreation or for public health and safety concerns. This includes wildlife habitats, rivers, groundwater recharge areas, and areas with mineral deposits. Trails, parks, outdoor

recreation areas commercial open space, utility easements, scenic roadway corridors, and areas requiring the regulation of hazardous conditions such as earthquake fault zones, unstable soils, flood plains, and watersheds are also considered open space.

The Early Inhabitants

Prior to European contact, the local Gabriolino Indians lived in more than 50 villages located throughout the Los Angeles Basin. Three early villages were located in the vicinity of La Habra Heights. They were Apachianga, Isantcangna, and Tsungna. Indian gathering activities were most likely concentrated along the Los Angeles and Rio Hondo River channels. Other post-contact Indian village sites are known to have existed in the vicinity of Tonner Canyon.

The ERME also fulfills the requirements of *Section 65560 to 65570 of the California Government Code* regarding the preparation of an open space element for the City. Open space and recreation are considered together because of the interdependence of the two. Areas preserved as open space may also serve as a valuable resource for outdoor recreation. Major conservation and open space issues affecting the City of La Habra Heights, which are considered in this Element, are summarized below.

- The City of La Habra Heights maintains natural terrain and drainage courses, dense vegetation, large open space areas, wildlife habitat, extensive areas available for groundwater replenishment, country roads following the terrain, dark skies and low noise levels, resulting in an entire community that represents a unique environmental resource. The effort to maintain the natural conditions in La Habra Heights has been an ongoing effort over more than the last 50 years and remains a cornerstone of the goals of this General Plan and the ERME.

- Native vegetation has been mixed with non-native species in all areas of the City. Native plant and animal species are found throughout the Puente Hills Wildlife Corridor as well as other canyon areas in the city, and include grassland, inland coastal sage scrub, mixed chaparral, and riparian woodland. These plant communities serve as habitats for amphibians, reptiles, birds, rodents and mammals. Sensitive (rare, threatened or endangered) animals are found throughout the City.
- The groundwater resources of the planning area are part of a complex system of aquifers and soil formations in the Los Angeles Basin. A number of groundwater basins in the region have experienced contamination in recent years from human endeavors such as the contamination of the main San Gabriel aquifer by aviation and other industrial activities.
- Oil resources continue to be tapped in La Habra Heights, as they are throughout the Puente Hills and surrounding area.
- Open space in the City includes the Puente Hills, City Park, the Hacienda golf course, the oil and gas production sites and steep hillsides. The City provides a variety of opportunities for the conservation of open space and natural resources. This General Plan continues to support the planning and preservation of the hillside areas and open space.
- There are a number of equestrian, hiking and biking trails in the area, including the Skyline Trail along the Puente Hills on the north as well as the trail system in Powder Canyon. The expansion of the existing system of equestrian and bicycle trails will allow greater use of these facilities.
- The Puente Hills and scenic roadway corridors such as Hacienda Road, East Road, West Road, and Harbor Boulevard provide

scenic resources in La Habra Heights. Other environmental resource issues include recycling, energy conservation, landscaped areas, and recreation programs.

Issues & Policies

The goals and policies below address the different conservation and open space concerns in La Habra Heights. These issues include resource conservation, energy conservation, open space, and its acquisition, recreation, scenic amenities and corridors, hillside areas, and recycling. The ERME goals and policies addressing these issues will provide a firm direction, for the preservation, use, protection, management, and improvement of existing resources in the City.

Issue – Resource Conservation

The City's natural environment contains many amenities that require protection for future generations. Resource conservation will protect and preserve existing resources in the City for future availability and use. The policies below reflect La Habra Heights' concern for natural resources in the planning area.

Objective #1. Preserve and conserve natural and cultural resources that have scientific, educational, economic, aesthetic, social, and cultural value.

Goal #1. Protect, preserve and enhance the residential rural character and individualistic lifestyle of La Habra Heights.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 1. Cooperate with state, federal and regional agencies to monitor water quality and protect it from contamination. Encourage the La Habra Heights Water District to provide an adequate supply of high quality water for local and regional needs. Encourage water conservation.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 2. Preserve and protect blue line streams, both from pollution, including contamination from liquid and solid waste disposal, and from streambed alterations such as change in course.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 3. Encourage practices that stress soil conservation as a means to retain native vegetation, maximize water infiltration, provide slope stabilization, allow scenic enjoyment, and reduce flood hazards.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 4. Preserve adequate open space areas for major habitat types, so as to maintain ecosystems in a natural balance for recreation, scientific, conservation, economic, educational, and scenic purposes.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 5. Work with appropriate land owners and government agencies to rehabilitate abandoned oil fields or encourage the rehabilitation of these lands within the planning area for open space, recreation, or other beneficial resource conservation uses after site reclamation.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 6. Encourage property owners to preserve and enhance areas with native vegetation, wildlife habitat, and visual beauty.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 7. Preserve mature trees and establish requirements for the replacement with more than one tree for every mature tree removed.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 8. Protect and preserve endangered species and sensitive native plant communities.

Issue – Energy Conservation

All development creates a demand for energy in the construction, maintenance, and operation of various structures and equipment. Energy is also consumed by human activities and vehicle use. Dwindling regional resources and increased demand have led to cost increases and the threat of resource depletion. Energy conservation will help reduce costs and assure resource availability in the future.

Objective 2. The City of La Habra Heights recognizes that current sources of energy are limited and should not be wasted. Whenever possible, especially in new development, special energy conservation measures should be included in the design of the project.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 9. Encourage energy conservation measures in existing and new developments, whether public or private, within the City.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 10. Encourage residents and new developments to take advantage of energy conservation programs.

Oil Resources in the City

The Puente Hills oil field continues to be dotted with wells, both active and abandoned. Major landowners in the area continue to be oil companies that initiated extraction activities in the early years of the 20th Century. These land holdings, largely depleted of oil, are being eyed for their potential development value.

Issue - Open Space

Open space areas refer to any parcel or area of land or water that is essentially unimproved and is devoted to an open space use for the purposes of (1) the preservation of natural resources, (2) the managed production of resources, (3) outdoor recreation, or (4) public health and safety. The preservation of existing open space will promote conservation of these resources and help maintain the quality of the environment. The policies below emphasize the City's concern for the availability of open space areas in the community.

Objective 3. Preserve the nature and characteristics of the city environment through careful planning and preservation of open space resources.

Goal 2. Minimize alteration of the natural terrain.

Goal 5. Protect, preserve, and increase open space reserves within the City by acquisition, easements, and other means available to ensure the maintenance of wildlife habitats, wildlife corridors, natural drainage courses, and passive recreational resources.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 11. Protect existing wildlife habitats through the preservation of open space.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 12. Future hillside development will be permitted only if it involves minimal adverse impacts on the environment and natural topography, and does not affect natural ridgelines more than necessary to allow a reasonable economic use of privately held land.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 13. Participate with the County of Los Angeles, the Southern California

Association of Governments, and other responsible agencies on all open space planning matters to the extent necessary to implement the City's General Plan policies regarding open space, construction, and wildlife preservation within its planning area.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 14. Establish and enforce mitigation measures for projects that have the potential for significant or irreversible adverse environmental effects.

Issue - Acquisition of Open Space

Open space areas in private ownership cannot be restricted to solely open space use in a General Plan. Development pressures will likely lead to development on vacant lands in the City and areas that are developed are not expected to revert back to open space.

Objective 4. Acquisition of open space land for resource retention and recreational use will be a priority in future planning.

Goal 1. Protect, preserve and enhance the residential rural character and individualistic lifestyle of La Habra Heights.

Goal 3. Preserve scenic views.

Goal 4. Preserve existing water courses, scenic beauty, mature trees and vegetation.

Goal 5. Protect, preserve, and increase open space reserves within the City by acquisition, easements, and other means available to ensure the maintenance of wildlife habitats, wildlife corridors, natural drainage courses, and passive recreational resources.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 15. The City shall encourage the dedication of open space land for public use and/or conservation purposes whenever possible.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 16. Retain existing open space in public ownership, wherever possible, including surplus land within the City limits offered for sale by other public agencies, including easements and rights of way.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 17. Encourage the retention of privately owned outdoor recreation uses and consider the public acquisition of such land when the open space uses located thereon may be discontinued by the owners.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 18. Actively pursue acquisition of open space areas not only to provide areas for recreation activities, but also to preserve environmental features that are valuable for their scientific, educational, conservation, scenic, and cultural values.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 19. Pursue the use of open space land used for public and semipublic rights-of-way for possible multiple use that would complement the continuity of other designated open space areas, with the consent of the owners and other appropriate agencies.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 20. Make every effort to locate funds for the acquisition of open space, including, but not limited to, Federal, State, County, and private sources.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 21. Upon subdivision of large undeveloped parcels in the City or upon the approval of Conditional Use Permits for non-residential uses, the City may require the development of equestrian and pedestrian routes to provide access to the Skyline Trail and the Wildlife Corridor Trails where

appropriate nexus can be shown between this mitigation and the impacts of the proposed development.

The City's Wildlife

The wildlife found in the City is diverse and, over time, has become adapted to the human presence. Mammals commonly seen in the area include the California ground squirrel, woodrat gray fox, coyote, and mule deer. The mule deer is the largest herbivore found within the Puente Hills and may be seen along trails and watering spots near dusk. The Puente Hills are part of a unique ecosystem that extends 31 miles from the Whittier Narrows to the San Gabriel River, to Santa Ana River, and the Cleveland National Forest.

Issue- Recreation

Recreation improves individual well being and is a source of enjoyment, diversion, health and entertainment. Recreation opportunities in the City are provided by a public park, private recreational facilities, open space areas, and bicycle, hiking and equestrian trails. These facilities make the City a more attractive residential location and support the recreational interests of residents.

Objective 5. Provide passive recreational resources consistent with the rural character of the community.

Goal 5. Protect, preserve and increase open space reserves within the City by acquisition in fee, acquisition of conservation easements and other means available to ensure the maintenance of wildlife habitats, wildlife corridors, natural drainage courses and passive recreational resources.

Objective 6. Preserve adequate open space areas for major habitat types, so as to maintain ecosystems in a natural balance for recreation, scientific conservation, economic, educational, and scenic purposes.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 22. Identify the needs and possible locations for walking, bicycle and equestrian trails in the City.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 23. Encourage cooperation between all user groups and agencies involved with parks and recreation.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 24. Integrate recreation planning efforts to consider conservation, open space, and scenic roadway areas and programs designed to conserve these resources.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 25. Support a system of continuous cross town bicycle, equestrian, and hiking trails that will encourage the use and enjoyment of public open space in the City and the surrounding area.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 26. Cooperate with the County of Los Angeles and other entities in the establishment and acquisition of open space and park land, including but not limited to, greenbelts, trails, and wilderness preserves.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 27. Promote access within the existing parks for the physically challenged.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 28. Coordinate the use of parkland with other community concerns, such as air quality, traffic circulation, and safety.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 29. Encourage the use of parks by promoting a wide range of uses and activities for equestrians, hikers, children, joggers, cyclists, etc.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 30. Encourage the preservation of privately owned residential open space.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 31. No undeveloped land in the City approved for recreation shall become active recreation use.

Issue - Scenic Amenities & Corridors

La Habra Heights has many scenic amenities that include the Puente Hills, narrow winding country roads, and attractive rural neighborhoods. These amenities enhance the environment and create a sense of identity for the City. By recognizing the factors that contribute to the area's aesthetic qualities, the City can better preserve and enhance the beauty of its physical environment.

Objective 6. Maintain scenic amenities in their rural form so as to provide beauty, identity, and form of the community.

Goal 1. Protect, preserve and enhance the residential rural character and individualistic lifestyle of La Habra Heights.

Goal 3. Preserve scenic views.

Goal 11. Resist and discourage urban features such as curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and street lights.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 32. Protect scenic corridors to maintain their aesthetic, recreational, cultural, or historic values.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 33. Identify the portions of the street system that, together with the adjacent scenic corridors, require special scenic treatments.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 34. Discourage bright outside lighting and, to the extent consistent with the necessities of public safety, prohibit streetlights to preserve dark skies at night.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 35. Take reasonable measures to preserve scenic views.

Issue - Wildlife Corridor

A portion of the City of La Habra Heights is part of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor (PCHWC). The corridor is an important ecological and scenic resource for the City. The area has even been identified as having worldwide importance because of its biodiversity. Without adequate controls and proper planning, the PCHWC and its resources could be lost, or destroyed forever.

Objective 7. Protect and preserve the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor.

Goal 5. Protect, preserve, and increase open space reserves within the City by acquisition, easements, and other means available to ensure the maintenance of wildlife habitats, wildlife corridors, natural drainage courses, and passive recreational resources.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 36. Work with land owners and government agencies in promoting land use plans that are sensitive to the environment and give maximum consideration to the preservation of natural habitats.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 37. Work with land owners and government agencies in identifying areas that should be preserved as open space for recreation, resource management, or public safety.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 38. Continue to work with Los Angeles and Orange Counties and other agencies in the preparation and review of development plans for land adjacent to PCHWC in identifying ways to ensure preservation and protection of the environment.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 39. Encourage the protection of existing wildlife in the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor (PCHWC).

Issue - Source Reduction and Recycling

The lack of available land for landfills and the environmental consequences of past waste disposal activities have led to the increasing need for recycling and reuse of materials, products, and solid waste. Reductions in the amount of solid waste will lead to the preservation of land for urban or open space use and the protection of soil, groundwater, and air resources.

Objective 8. Promote recycling, source reduction, and waste management practices to reduce the volume of solid waste.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 40. Support and complement existing recycling programs by public and private agencies (Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4-H Club, etc.)

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 41. Continue to implement the Source Reduction and Recycling element pursuant to AB 939.

Environmental Resource Management Element Policy 42. Encourage the reduction of green waste through composting.

A Threatened Plant Community

Coastal Sage Scrub is a very threatened plant community found within the Southern California landscape. Once common in the region, Coastal Sage Scrub is protected by both state and federal regulations. Local examples of this community may be seen in Hellman Park, Sycamore Canyon, the Arroyo San Miguel, and Powder Canyon.

Resource Management Plan

The ERME is directly related to the Land Use Element in that both establish land use policy that will be effective in natural resource preservation and conservation. The Resource Management Plan is depicted graphically in Exhibit 3-1. The Resource Management Plan indicates those areas of the City that are included within one of the City's three Open Space land use designations as well as those areas subject to the Conservation Overlay Designation. The Land Use Plan (Exhibit 2-1 included in the Land Use Element) identified the following three "open space" land use categories that are also depicted in the Resource Management Plan:

Open Space- Resources (O-1). This open space land use designation applies to that land used for the purpose of resource production. This designation applies to those sites located throughout the City that contain producing natural gas and oil wells and their support facilities. At such time as the resources are depleted, and after an area has been remediated to restore its suitability for a different use, it is expected that a request for a change in the General Plan land use designation will be entertained by the City.

Open Space-Recreation (O-2). This open space land use designation includes the golf course at Hacienda Country Club, the City Park, and other open space areas used for recreational purposes.

Open Space – Conservation. (O-3) This land use designation is mainly dedicated to the protection of the 670 acres owned by the Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Preservation Authority, a wildlife corridor and natural conservation area. At such time as other conservation areas are established or expanded in the City, it is expected that this land use designation will be accorded to those areas as well. This land use designation is devoted to conservation of natural vegetation and wildlife associated with the natural environments of the Puente Hills region of Southern California. The existing Los Angeles Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is also included within the land use designation.

The Resource Management Plan also indicates those areas where significant protected plant communities are known or suspected to be present. These major habitat areas include coastal sage habitat, oak woodlands, walnut woodlands, oak and walnut woodlands, and riparian habitats.

The City acknowledges the property rights of the individual property owners in the use of their land. The purpose of the identification of these habitats in Exhibit 3-1 is to indicate those areas where appropriate regulations should be adhered to in the development of vacant properties within these areas. As a result, property owners developing near sensitive habitats or a designated blue line stream may be required to obtain the requisite review from the trustee agencies.

Finally, the map indicates those properties that are located near the interface with the natural conservation areas. Because of the requirements governing fire hazard mitigation zones, care needs to be taken to minimize disturbance of the natural habitat. Those areas included within the "Conservation Overlay" designation may require field surveys by qualified biologists to ascertain the potential impact and to establish appropriate mitigation.

Environmental Resource Management Element

This Overlay designation implements the following Land Use Element policy:

“Land Use Element Policy 40. Properties that adjoin the existing preserves shall be developed with consideration for prevention of adverse impacts upon the preserved plant and animal communities as shown on the Conservation Area Overlay, (Exhibit 3-1).”

Table 3-1 summarizes the various designations that are applicable to the Resource Management Plan.

General Plan	Zoning Designation	Description	Land Area
O-1 Resource Production	O-1 Resource Production	This designation applies to areas engaged in resource (oil and natural gas) production. At such time the resource production ceases, a general plan amendment will be required in the event the property owner seeks to convert the land to another use.	208.21-acres
O-2 Recreation	O-2 Recreation	These areas are used for recreation (both passive and active). The General Plan requires that any new public open space land be limited to a passive use.	166.21-acres
O-3 Conservation	O-3 Conservation	This designation applies to those areas reserved for resource and habitat protection.	720.07-acres
Conservation Overlay	NA	Properties that adjoin the existing preserves shall be developed with consideration for prevention of adverse impacts upon the preserved plant and animal communities, as shown on the Conservation Overlay (Exhibit 3-1)	389.12 acres

Source: City of La Habra Heights. 2002

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