

Agenda Report

January 23, 2012

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning Department
SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF THE REVISED OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT OF THE GENERAL PLAN

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Adopt the Initial Environmental Study and Negative Declaration (Attachment B); and
2. Approve a resolution adopting the Open Space and Conservation Element of the General Plan (Attachment A) which replaces the 1976 Open Space Element, the 1976 Conservation Element and the 1983 Energy Element.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On October 26, 2011, the Planning Commission adopted the September 12, 2011 recommendation of the Open Space and Conservation Element Advisory Committee and recommended that the City Council:

1. Adopt the Initial Environmental Study and Negative Declaration (Attachment B.)
2. Adopt the Open Space and Conservation Element with the following amendments
 - a. Change the 2nd implementation measure under Residential Impact Fee on page 25 to read - "The residential impact fee shall be used only for acquiring, increasing or expanding active and passive usable open spaces and not for repairs and maintenance."
 - b. Change the 5th implementation measure under Zoning Changes on page 25 to read "Re-evaluate and revise if necessary the existing Hahamongna Watershed Park Master Plan in the context of current city policies".
3. That the City Council create an Open Space Committee whose charge would be to implement the Open Space & Conservation Element, comprised of members from the Planning Commission, Environmental Advisory Commission and the Recreation and Parks Commission, and which would meet at least quarterly or more frequently as needed.

4. That the City Manager designate a point person within staff for implementation of the Open Space & Conservation Element.

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On August 23, 2011, the Environmental Advisory Commission reviewed the draft element and adopted the following motion:

Recommend to the City Council the adoption of the Open Space and Conservation Element of the General Plan with the following amendments:

1. Change 2nd implementation measure under Residential Impact Fee on page 25 to read – “The residential impact fee shall be used only for acquiring, increasing, or expanding active and passive usable open spaces and not for repairs and maintenance.”
2. Change the 5th bullet point under Zoning Changes on page 25 to read “Re-evaluate and revise if necessary the existing Hahamongna Watershed Park Master Plan in the context of current city policies”.
3. Change the 6th implementation measure on page 51 to read “Identify the Environmental Advisory Commission and the Recreation and Parks Commission to lead the implementation of the element and to hold joint commission meetings as needed, with a minimum of 1 joint meeting per year.”

RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On September 6, 2011, the Recreation and Parks Commission reviewed the draft element and adopted the following motion:

Recommend to the City Council the adoption of the Open Space and Conservation Element of the General Plan with the following amendments:

1. Recommend that the City Manager designate a point person within staff for implementation of the Open Space & Conservation Element.
2. Recommend that the City Council create an Open Space Committee whose charge would be to implement the Open Space & Conservation Element, comprised of members from the Planning Commission, Environmental Advisory Commission and the Recreation and Parks Commission, and which would meet at least quarterly or more frequently as needed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Open Space and Conservation are two of the required elements or chapters of the General Plan. Pasadena’s current Open Space and Conservation Elements were last updated in 1976. Staff is proposing to combine these two required elements into one. In November 2007, the City Council adopted a Green Space, Parks and Recreation

Element and Master Plan which sets the policies for developed parks and recreation programs.

The Open Space and Conservation Element provides a blueprint for natural open space and conservation. Preparation of the element was guided by four major sources of information – community outreach, an inventory of existing and potential open spaces, a review of adopted open space and conservation plans, and coordination with agencies and organizations that the City partners with to protect and enhance open space and promote sustainability. The existing 1983 Energy Element is one of the optional elements that comprise the General Plan. In order to address energy issues in a more comprehensive manner, this element will be eliminated and energy issues are addressed in the Open Space and Conservation Element.

BACKGROUND:

The Element is guided by the following vision statement which informs the goals, objectives and implementation measures:

Pasadena treasures, protects, restores, and expands its natural open space and exemplifies innovative and effective natural resource stewardship and conservation.

The Element is organized into three major sections. Within each section are goals and objectives, background information, and implementation measures.

The Open Space goals include:

- Protecting, acquiring and creating open space
- Providing access and connectivity to open spaces for both wildlife and people
- Preserving, restoring and maintaining Eaton Canyon and the Arroyo Seco
- Welcoming and valuing citizen participation in open space planning
- Defining and recognizing the benefits of open space

Implementation measures to achieve these goals are organized under the categories of protecting and increasing open space; funding for open space acquisition, including using the residential impact fee; and partnering with other community groups and government entities.

The goals in the Wildlife, Native Plants and the Urban Forest section focus on:

- Protecting, maintaining and restoring native wildlife and native plants in the city
- Protecting habitat linkages
- Protecting and enhancing the urban forest

Implementation measures include continuing to implement and periodically assess the effectiveness of the tree protection ordinance; identifying and expanding wildlife corridors; providing education for residents and city staff about practices that can

discourage non-native plants and support native plants; and providing information about bird and wildlife friendly practices.

The Environmental Quality, Conservation and Sustainable Use Practices section includes five major goals:

- Protecting and conserving natural resources
- Improving the quality of the natural environment
- Improving the quality of the urban environment
- Effectively managing environmental health and solid waste
- Increasing public and governmental awareness of the natural environment and public health

The implementation measures were derived from existing policy documents and are organized into the following subject areas: energy, alternative energy, water, air quality and greenhouse gas, solid waste, environmental health, and management and education.

Community Participation

In May 2008, the City Council appointed four community representatives to the Open Space and Conservation Element Advisory Committee. These community members along with representatives of the Planning, Environmental Advisory, and Recreation and Parks Commissions and representatives of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, formed the nine member committee which was charged with overseeing the preparation of the Element.

Since the Fall of 2008, the City has engaged hundreds of residents who have shared their ideas about how to shape the City's open spaces and conservation efforts at community fairs, open houses and workshops. These efforts included a web page and on-line surveys, a traveling kiosk, a community fair, coordination with the outreach of the Land Use & Mobility Element update process, and community workshops and meetings.

At these events, the major themes included:

- The existing natural open spaces are well loved and an important contributor to the quality of life in Pasadena.
- Connections to natural areas in the foothills and mountains are very important.
- There is strong support for Pasadena's environmental sustainability efforts.
- More open space should be established in Pasadena, including parks in the Central District.
- Open spaces should be protected from loss due to new development.
- A citywide network of open spaces should be established with equitable distribution and access to all neighborhoods.
- Pasadena should improve water and energy efforts and reduce solid waste and become a model sustainable city.

ANALYSIS:

The recommendations from the Committee and Commissions highlight the several areas of community concern regarding open space and conservation.

Residential Impact Fee

The residential impact fee (RIF) was created in 1988 to mitigate impacts on the park system from new residential development. It is imposed on all new residential development. In 2004, following a nexus study, the fee was increased from \$3,659 per residential unit to \$19,743 per unit. In 2005, the fee calculation methodology was revised and the fee is now assessed based on the number of bedrooms in the residential unit. The fees currently range from \$15,925 for a studio unit to \$29,477 for a 5 bedroom or larger unit.

From July 2003 to June 2010, the City collected \$18.7 million in residential impact fees. The uses to which the fees can be put are limited by Pasadena Municipal Code Chapter 4.17, and specifically section 4.17.060. Specifically, fees must be used on developing park or recreational facilities, or targeting certain improvements for acquisition, construction and installation. The interest on funds may be used to maintain any park or capital improvement in any park. The City Council adopts by resolution a schedule disbursing such funds. These fees were used to help fund creation of Viña Vieja Park and to help acquire the Annandale Canyon open space area. They were also used to replace and construct park restrooms and playground equipment, improve park lighting, construct trails and replace park walkways. The RIF is the City's primary source of funding for improving parks and open spaces. Approximately 25% of the RIF has been spent on acquisition of new park and open space land and 75% on improving existing parks and open spaces.

Some members of the community and some of the advisory commissions recommend that more of the RIF be spent on acquisition and that park and open space improvements be shifted to the General Fund. The Planning Commission, Open Space & Conservation Element Committee and Environmental Advisory Commission recommend that the fee solely be used for acquisition of park and open space land.

Staff does not concur because this fund is the primary source of revenue to improve parks, implement park master plans as well as acquire open space. Shifting these projects into the General Fund would create significant fiscal impacts that cannot be absorbed at this time.

Discussion about priorities for expenditure of these funds is more appropriately taken up during the annual budget process. As such, the recommendation in the draft element states: "Develop a plan to establish a fixed ratio for spending the residential impact fee so that it emphasizes acquisition rather than repairs (capital improvements) with the goal of reallocating a higher proportion of the responsibility for park improvement and repairs to the General Fund."

Staff/Commission Oversight of Open Space

Input from the community and the advisory bodies indicate that there is concern that there is not a single city staff department or city commission dedicated to natural open space acquisition and preservation. Staff in the Public Works, Planning and City Manager's Departments have all participated in open space acquisition and improvement efforts. The Environmental Advisory, Recreation and Parks, and Planning Commissions have participated in open space issues.

Recommendations from the advisory bodies include having regular joint meetings of these groups to review open space and related conservation issues or establishing a committee comprised of members of these three commissions to oversee open space issues. The draft element recommends consolidating within one commission the responsibility to promote the open space, conservation and environmental health policies of this document.

On January 25, staff will be presenting a report to the Legislative Policy Committee regarding City commissions. Amongst other things, the report includes suggestions regarding commission oversight for parks and open space. As adoption of the Open Space and Conservation Element is not contingent on making a determination as to which commission(s) should provide oversight, the City Council may wish to defer the question until after the Legislative Policy Committee has held its discussion.

Hahamongna Watershed Park

There was a lot of discussion in the community and among the Commissions about the adopted Hahamongna Watershed Park Plan. The recommendation from the Planning Commission, Open Space and Conservation Element Committee and the Environmental Advisory Commission is to revisit this issue by updating the Hahamongna Watershed Park plan in the context of existing city policies.

The draft element states only that the City should protect the existing natural open space within the Hahamongna Watershed Park Master Plan area. The County sediment removal project may result in significant changes to the Hahamongna area. Those changes may make it appropriate to review the plan after the completion of that project. Community concerns about natural open space could be reviewed at that time.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

This action updates the existing Open Space and Conservation Elements of the General Plan to reflect more current City goals and policies in the areas of natural open space and resource conservation. The Element incorporates the goals of the Urban Accords and is supportive of the City Council Strategic Planning Goal to increase conservation and sustainability.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA – Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et seq.), an Initial Environmental Study and draft Negative Declaration for the Open Space and Conservation Element were prepared and circulated for public review (See Attachment B.) The Initial Study concluded that adoption of the Element will not result in significant impacts on the physical environment. The 20-day review period for the draft Negative Declaration concluded on October 26, 2011. No written comments were received on the environmental documentation as of the preparation of this report.

FISCAL IMPACT:

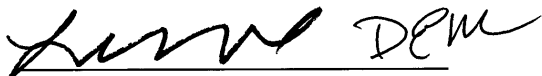
Approval of the Open Space and Conservation Element of the General Plan will establish policies to guide future open space and conservation decisions in the City. These policies impact not only what the City will look like, but also influence the quality of life of the City. The exact fiscal impact of these policies cannot be measured; however they are intended to create an environment that supports the community's vision of a healthy community.

Respectfully submitted,



VINCENT P. BERTONI, AICP
Director of Planning

Prepared by:



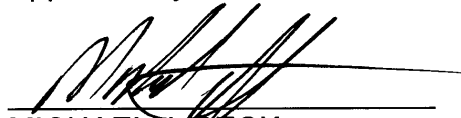
Laura F. Dahl
Senior Planner

Concurrence:



SIOBHAN FOSTER
Director of Public Works

Approved by:



MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

Attachments:

- Attachment A – Draft Open Space and Conservation Element of the General Plan*
- Attachment B – Initial Environmental Study and Negative Declaration
- Attachment C – Letters received

* The Draft Element and the Appendix are also available on the Open Space & Conservation Element website at: <http://www.cityofpasadena.net/openspace>. The appendix includes summaries of the community workshops, more information from the open space inventory, and on the residential impact fee.

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PASADENA
APPROVING THE OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT OF THE
COMPREHENSIVE GENERAL PLAN**

WHEREAS, the City Council of Pasadena last updated the Open Space Element and the Conservation Element in 1976, and the Energy Element in 1983; and

WHEREAS, the California Government Code encourages periodic review of all General Plan Elements to evaluate the appropriateness of the goals, objectives, and policies in light of changing circumstances in the City and the region; and the effectiveness of such Elements in attainment of the community's open space and conservation goals and objectives; and

WHEREAS, it will better serve the City of Pasadena to combine the goals, objectives, and policies of these three Elements into one Open Space and Conservation Element; and

WHEREAS, the Open Space and Conservation Element has been prepared based on comments from City staff, public testimony, the Planning Commission, the Recreation and Parks Commission, the Environmental Advisory Commission, and the Open Space and Conservation Element Advisory Committee; and the Element is attached to the City Council staff report dated January 23, 2012 and incorporated herein by this reference; and

WHEREAS, public review has been conducted; a Negative Declaration has been prepared and circulated according to law; and the Planning Commission recommended

to the City Council that it adopt the Negative Declaration and Open Space and Conservation Element on October 26, 2011, and

WHEREAS, the adoption of the Open Space and Conservation Element and the related Negative Declaration were the subject of a public hearing before the City Council on January 23, 2012, and Council adopted the Negative Declaration.

NOW, THEREFORE, the City Council of the City of Pasadena hereby adopts the Open Space and Conservation Element dated January 23, 2012 of the Comprehensive General Plan, thereby replacing the 1976 Open Space Element, the 1976 Conservation Element, and the 1983 Energy Element of the General Plan.

Adopted at the regular meeting of the City Council on the _____ day of _____, 2012, by the following vote:

AYES:

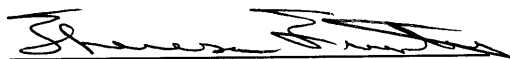
NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

MARK JOMSKY, CMC
CITY CLERK

Approved as to form:



Theresa E. Fuentes
Assistant City Attorney