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OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT

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## OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT

### INTRODUCTION

The Open Space and Conservation Elements are mandatory elements under California law. These elements were the result of increased environmental awareness and accompanying legislation, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The California Planning, Zoning, and Development Law, Government Code Section 65302(e) requires the Open Space Element. As defined in Article 10.5, Section 65560: "Open-space land is any parcel or area of land or water which is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open space use as defined in this section, and which is designated on a local, regional or state open-space plan as any of the following:"

- (a) "Open space for the preservation of natural resources"
- (b) "Open space used for the managed production of resources"
- (c) "Open space for outdoor recreation"
- (d) "Open space for public health and safety"

Section 65302(d) states a conservation element for "the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources including water and its hydraulic force, forest, soils, rivers and other waters, harbors, fisheries, wildlife, minerals, and other natural resources."

The City of Colton has combined the Open Space and Conservation Elements for the purpose of clarity and brevity.

### ASSESSMENT

This assessment of existing open space and conservation factors for Colton is a capsulized version of a complete analysis found in the Community Profile Report. A visual presentation of critical open space and conservation factors are also identified (see Exhibit D located in the map pocket which accompanies this document).

#### Open Space

Open Space area designations for Colton are affected by five factors: 1) urban areas, 2) environmental hazards, 3) conservation factors, and 4) public ownership and permanent open space.

##### Urban Areas

Urban open space is handled through the provision of park and recreational services. The City owns and operates six community and neighborhood parks,

offering a full range of both passive and active recreational services. Colton currently has 37 acres of developed public park area which falls short by 87 acres when tested against the City's planning index of 5 acres per 1,000 population (which equates to 124 acres City-wide). Even with the joint use of school facilities being considered, the combined total of 88 acres is still deficient of current need by 36 acres. Moreover, an additional 237 to 262 acres of improved parks and/or school recreational facilities will be required for long term planning of anticipated community growth, if desired park standards are to be achieved.

### Environmental Hazards

Areas in which environmental hazards pose a danger to life and property are usually best used as open space. Hazards in Colton include: earthquake faults or barriers; Santa Ana River flooding; natural channels and watersheds draining into them; and fire danger in nearby mountain canyons.

### Conservation Factors

Conservation factors include water, energy, archeological and mineral resources existing in the community as specifically evaluated in Section 10.3 of the Colton Community Profile Report. Open space planning should provide for the conservation of such factors in order that cultural resource may be preserved and future resource consumption demands within the community and beyond may be satisfied. Within the planning area boundaries, mineral and archeological resource are most affected by open space designations.

### Public Ownership and Permanent Open Space

Land can be retained as permanent open space through public ownership and agricultural land use. The Riverwash area is almost entirely owned by the San Bernardino County Flood Control District and can be considered permanent open space for flood control, water conservation and recreation. Other publicly owned permanent open spaces include: Colton Joint Unified School District properties; City parks and park sites; cemeteries; portions of State Highway right-of-way which could be landscaped; and water and electricity production and distribution systems.

### Conservation

With increasing demand for our natural resources comes an urgent need to evaluate the carrying capacity of the environment. Not only must potential resource supplies be discovered but, even more importantly, efforts must be made to conserve. The conservation concerns of Colton are outlined below.

## Water Supply and Distribution

The primary supply source for meeting City water consumption needs is the local groundwater basin. The City's distribution system presently is able to meet current demands and near-term future demands with existing facilities. Within the distribution system periodic problems occur with water quality due to aging pipe lines and some older wells. Expected long-term growth will require upgrading of older facilities, installation of new wells and expansion of existing storage capacity. The current water supply source should be adequate to meet future needs. In the event groundwater tables are lowered significantly or water quality is diminished, arrangements for tie-ins to the California Aqueduct will need to be made through the San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District.

## Storm Drainage

The San Bernardino County Comprehensive Storm Drain Plan includes all of the Colton Planning Area. The plan includes a description of each drainage area and sub-drainage area in the community, existing storm drains and sizes, and proposed storm drains and sizes. A 25-year design run-off frequency was recommended for most improvements in the system. Recommended priorities for improvement in the Storm Drain Plan are being studied in relation to historic, periodic and potential flooding in the Planning Area and to proposed General Plan development concepts.

## Sanitation

In terms of the General Plan there are three major sanitation issues. The first of these is the quality of waste water discharged from the sewage treatment plant into the Santa Ana River. To date, few problems have been encountered in this regard, with only the occasional incidence of Federal and State water quality standards being exceeded. Most of the problems have resulted from industrial discharge which has exceeded the capacity of the treatment plant. These problems have been, or are currently, being resolved.

The second issue revolves around the availability of adequate capacity in the in-place and planned sewer mains, and in the capacity of the treatment facility. At present, the treatment facility has a current capacity of 5.4 million gallons per day (mgd), and an ultimate expansion capacity of 10.9 mgd. Capacity is currently adequate and able to accommodate current growth rates in the area.

The final issue concerns solid waste disposal. The City currently uses the County landfill located on south La Cadena Drive. This facility is expected to reach capacity by 1988, after which alternative landfill sites will be used (the San Timateo Canyon site and the Milken Avenue site). The use of these alternative sites will result in additional transporting costs and may increase rubbish collection costs.

## Energy

Energy sources available to Colton play an important role in determining the type and amount of development that the future can hold. Initial research indicates that adequate electrical distribution systems are presently in place or planned for reasonable future development within the Colton area. There also appears to be an adequate supply of natural gas for the near term future. For the long term, however, Colton will need to look at supplementing local demands with alternative energy sources, such as solar energy.

## Archeological Resources

The Colton planning area contains significant cultural resources reflective of pre-european settlement and early european settlement periods. Archeological record and site surveys have been conducted within the Colton Planning Area to identify significant sites. Although a comprehensive record search has not been conducted for the entire Planning Area, independent project surveys have identified significant sites at numerous locations near the Santa Ana river and throughout other sections of the community. Based on the occurrence of sites within various confined areas, the existence of significant pre-european (Indian) habitats at the time of settlement by Spanish missionaries is a probability. In spite of the substantial amounts of previous disturbance, throughout the planning area there is at least some possibility that significant unrecorded sites are present on locations, although surface evidence may have already been destroyed.

## Mineral Resources

Mineral Resources in the Colton area may not all be identified despite comprehensive research by the division of mines and geology. With future geologic surveying, additional deposits may be discovered, however, the main resource is currently the limestone desopits in and around Slover Mountain. Extractive processes must be regulated to provide for the health and safety of people. Depleted extraction sites need to be restored to useable condition and known deposits of minerals not now accessible or needed should be protected and conserved for future generations.

## THE POLICY PLAN

### General Objective

To establish and maintain an open space and conservation system which will ensure the conservation and wise utilization of valuable resources and will meet local and regional open space needs.

## Principles and Standards

### Principles:

1. Preserve and protect hillside and environmentally sensitive areas designated for growth through the use of strict hillside development standards.
2. Ensure a wide range of active and passive recreational uses through the promotion of a coordinated system of open space areas and linkages directed to scenic, scientific, cultural, and nature-oriented uses.
3. Conserve and protect open space needed for the preservation of air quality, water quality, water supply, waste disposal, noise abatement or public safety through zoning and other regulatory tools.
4. Protect significant mineral deposit sites from irreplaceable resource extraction until a regional shortage or impending need can be demonstrated and when permit approvals guarantee restoration of such areas to their natural state.
5. Establish education and incentive programs for energy and resource conservation.
6. Restrict development in canyons and hillsides and control the plan of development to prevent obstruction of natural runoff or water courses and to prevent unwarranted scarring of hillsides.
7. Outstanding scenic vistas and visual features shall be preserved and protected through the use of view easements, height limitations, and a design review board.
8. Establish a beautification program involving litter clean-up, street tree planting, and landscaped medians and parking lots.

### Standards:

1. There shall be five (5) acres of park land per 1,000 residents.
2. Intensive human uses, such as residential development or major vehicular traffic improvements, shall be prohibited in areas of documented ecological significance.
3. The use of natural and drought-tolerant vegetation shall be encouraged for landscaping in order that maintenance and water consumption are minimized.
4. Strict enforcement of water and air quality standards shall be applied to all industrial users through business license approvals, fire inspections and code enforcement of performance standards.

5. Hillside development standards shall be adopted requiring:
  - a. Focused EIRs for all hillside developments exceeding ten (10) parcels in a single development or subdivision.
  - b. New development shall occur on those sites that require the least amount of grading and vegetation removal.
  - c. Roads shall follow the natural topography and are not to exceed a grade of 12 percent.
  - d. Hillside densities shall be determined after consideration of safety, access, public infrastructure availability, environmental damage and aesthetics, but generally should not exceed two dwellings per acre.

### PLAN PROPOSALS

The designation of open space and conservation areas and the statement of goals and policies can have little beneficial effect unless transformed into a course of action by implementation programs. There are four main categories of plan proposals:

1. Open space shall be preserved through a program for the public acquisition of open space land and designation for agricultural activities. The possibilities include:
  - a. Direct purchase, eminent domain purchase, purchase-sell (with restricted rights);
  - b. Life-estate and lease-leaseback (for recreational development);
  - c. There are also less-than-fee methods such as development rights, easements, and public works potentials.
  
2. Regulation shall be used to maintain open space requiring:
  - a. An amendment to the Colton Zoning Ordinance designating an Open Space Zone District such as the flood plain zone;
  - b. The dedication of land or in-lieu fees for local parks and recreation shall be required prior to approval of the subdivision of land. (Quimby Act);
  - c. Development standards revised and made consistent with open space and conservation policies;
  - d. The grading of soil and construction of impervious surfaces on open space lands shall be strictly regulated.

3. A program of incentives to preserve open space shall be implemented including:
  - a. The non-application of Quimby Act requirements, and/or density benefits, may be granted for Planned Unit Developments which significantly reduce the total area of impervious surfaces (streets, roofs, etc.), reduce necessary grading and disturbance of the land, and provide for perpetual maintenance of open space and recreation areas.
  - b. Tax benefits may be granted for lands placed in agricultural (Williamson Act) or open space preserves.
  
4. Take maximum possible advantage of federal and state funding programs for open space and conservation purposes.