

## **Section VI**

# **OPEN SPACE/ CONSERVATION ELEMENT**

**GOALS, OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES**

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## **OPEN SPACE/ CONSERVATION ELEMENT**

### **Goal**

To maintain a system of active open space along stream channels and passive open space within hillsides as a means to preserve the rural character of the community.

### **Objective 1**

To promote the City's greenbelts as the basis of its open space system.

### **Policies**

- 1a Designate as greenbelt, stream channel areas for flood control setback, maintenance of riparian habitat and preservation of open space.
- 1b Designate as greenbelt, areas of significant vegetation, prominent features, or scenic beauty.
- 1c Provide non-motorized travel linkage to all areas of the community, to greenbelt paths, to schools, to activity centers and to areas of historical interest.
- 1d Promote City/regional mapping of Clayton greenbelt system and city – system linkages to State and regional parks and trails.
- 1e Keep improvements along greenbelts to a minimum but provide path improvements to minimize erosion, provide directional markings and create rest areas.

### **Objective 2**

To develop neighborhood parks within the greenbelt system adjacent to other community facilities.

### **Policies**

- 2a Continue requirement for parkland dedication for neighborhood parks that are compatible with the system of greenbelts.
- 2b Set aside neighborhood parkland where new school sites are identified to establish common facilities and help promote their use.
- 2c Review each park/greenbelt area for maintenance needs, and identify alternative methods to provide maintenance including home – owner associations, park districts, volunteer measures and dedication to State and regional park systems.
- 2d Consider establishment of a community park.

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### **Objective 3**

To establish an open space conservation designations to preserve natural resources, to manage resources, to provide for outdoor recreation, to promote health and safety and to ensure orderly growth.

#### **Policies**

- 3a Apply Public Park/Open Space designation to areas of public park and recreation facilities.
- 3b Cluster development in order to allow a Private Open Space designation on sites that pose natural limitations such as streams channel, earthquake fault, unstable soil or prominent hilltop or ridge, fire hazard areas, and ground water recharge areas.
- 3c Apply Agriculture designation to parcels planned to remain under the jurisdiction of Contra Costa County in agricultural usage.
- 3d Apply Quarry designation to the Lone Star quarry.
- 3e Utilize the environmental review process to evaluate habitat impacts of a project and identify appropriate mitigations. This review may be done on an area-wide basis, for example, as through the Marsh Creek Road Specific Plan.

#### **Implementation Measures**

- 1. Prepare a greenbelt path map for public information.
- 2. Develop pathway standards.
- 3. Obtain updated flood boundaries.
- 4. Investigate East Bay and State park fund applications, gift dedication, purchase and resale of property, district formation and scenic easements.
- 5. Identify distinctive natural and manmade features such as ridgelines, landmark trees, arroyos and rock outcroppings to be preserved.

### **OPEN SPACE/ CONSERVATION SETTING**

Clayton is located at the base of the north slope of Mt. Diablo. The Clayton Planning Area is bounded to the south by Mt. Diablo State Park and to the northeast by Black Diamond Regional Preserve. The northern and western boundaries are shared with Concord. In general, growth for the City of Clayton must be directed east. The northeastern area and the eastern area beyond the planning area include rugged terrain with many sites designated by the County as Agriculture.

Several natural creeks run through Clayton that have been integrated into a greenbelt system of parks. This system allows park site expansion and connection to park facilities at points throughout the system.

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## CONSERVATION ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The size and location of the City of Clayton preclude many conservation concerns identified in Section 65302(d) of the Government Code. For instance, within the General Plan area of Clayton there is negligible hydraulic force to creeks; and there is no potential for harbor, fishing or marina. Within the planning area one can find varying soils, hillsides, creeks, woodland, a rock quarry and land subject to flooding.

When Clayton incorporated in 1964, the measure was largely fueled by the desire to protect the city's natural scenic resources. The City's conservation effort has focused on protecting the riparian corridor, limiting development on the Keller Ranch to less than half the site, and promoting acquisition of land to the State Park.

In 1973 the City adopted its Master Trails Plan as an addition to the Recreation, Parks and Open Space Element of the Clayton General Plan. Since then information was updated by Contra Costa County in order to extend the Clayton Trails Plan to development areas considered by the county.

The initial purpose of the plan was to provide riding and hiking trails for Clayton area residents. The effect of this action was to preserve a riparian corridor for three creeks beginning at the city limits of Clayton and terminating at the Mt. Diablo State Park. Naturally, the alignment of the creeks through the Town Center will be difficult but the remainder of the alignment on Mt. Diablo, Donner, Mitchell and potentially on Peacock Creek will be preserved.

The City owns title or has easement rights to most of the creeks and measure will be taken to acquire land to develop an unbroken chain of access from the City limits to the State Park. Specific locations of creeks, rights-of-way and easements is available at the Clayton City office. Riparian corridor protection provides protection to the entire watershed.

In the course of development of Keller Ranch and any smaller parcels, strict development control will be provided to prevent stream pollution or flooding. Flood improvements will be made in conjunction with the County Flood Control District and will be funded by developer fees and public measures such as a redevelopment agency or grant programs.

As indicated in the Safety Element, the City of Clayton is a participant in the Federal Emergency Management Agency Flood Control Program. As new areas annex, the City will extend engineering to those areas.

Both creek bank and foothill erosion are problems of concern to Clayton. In both cases vegetation and construction solutions are employed. New developments are required to implement erosion control plans and bank work along the creeks is periodically undertaken to limit loss of land and sedimentation.

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The Lone Star quarry lies within Clayton's planning area but not its jurisdiction. The quarry was established in 1949 and sells varying sizes of high grade rock to independent contractors. There is very little complaint about the quarry because development has been limited in its direct vicinity. There is continuous complaint about the trucks due to noise, speeding and rock spill. Clayton has been working with the quarry to remedy those problems. Clayton is also aware of the regulatory and protectionary measures granted the quarry by the Department of Mines and Geology.

### **OPEN SPACE ISSUES**

The City of Clayton occupies approximately 2,400 acres of land. The Clayton Sphere of Influence extends to 3,800 acres of land. Within Clayton, open space falls into four categories: public park/open space, private open space, quarry and agriculture. Open space is necessary to the community despite the fact that it does not promote maximum feasible development intimated by the Housing Element. It is easy to see in this case that without striking balance, the State's conflicting intent between open space and housing elements could force a jurisdiction into a conflict situation. In Clayton's case, the balance occurs by selecting infill lots and portions of large parcels that can most feasibly be developed while preserving creeks, view corridors, and areas of greatest geologic limitation.

As indicated in the previous section, the City has had a policy from incorporation to protect its creeks from development to the extent possible through dedication, acquisition, easement and design. The policy has been implemented at every approval. Standards for active open spaces within Clayton are as follows:

Developed Parks (athletic fields, picnic areas, tot lots, etc.)	3 acres per 1,000 population
Maintained Open Spaces (greenbelt and trails, etc.)	7 Acres per 1,000 population
Total Active Open Spaces	10 Acres per 1,000 population

## OPEN SPACE DESIGNATIONS

The City of Clayton seeks to preserve open space and provide recreational opportunities to Clayton residents within the City limits. Four designations have been created to fulfill these goals: Private Open Space, Public Park/Open Space, Quarry and Agriculture. The following text describes these four categories:

1. **Private Open Space (PR)**

This designation includes privately-owned open spaces. Typical examples in Clayton include the Oakhurst golf course and areas where development has been clustered to retain open space. Other examples include private recreational facilities such as the riding club southeast of Clayton, the swimming pools at Marsh Creek Park Villas and Dana Hills, and the open space within Dana Hills and Westwood. These facilities allow individuals to expand their recreational opportunities at cost and benefit to the users rather than the public at large. Such facilities should be promoted so long as traffic, noise and other related impacts are mitigated.

Only open space development, recreation and preservation uses are allowed in this designation. Owners' potential rights to other types of development on these properties have been clustered on adjoining parts of some parcels.

2. **Public Park/Open Space/Open Space and Recreational (PU)**

This designation applies to open space and recreational lands under City, County or State jurisdiction. Such uses within the planning area include City-owned open space areas and developed neighborhood and community parks, creek corridors, Mt. Diablo State Park, and the Open Space areas within the Oakhurst subdivision (dedicated to the City). Allowable uses in this designation include trails, greenbelts, playfields and parks, as well as accessory structures and uses normally auxiliary to them.

a. **Regional Parks**

Regional and State Parks offer a wide range of park and recreational facilities intended to serve large sections of population living in a metropolitan area. These parks generally provide for all-day or weekend visitors, contrasted with local parks, which are designed for shorter, more frequent use. There are fifteen regional/State parks located within an hour's drive of Clayton.

Some of the most beautiful and desirable areas in Mt. Diablo State Park are in the northern portion, adjacent to Clayton. The City will encourage the State to acquire land to the extent possible along the southern border of Clayton. The City will cooperate with the State in providing access to

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these facilities. To the northeast of Clayton lies Black Diamond Regional Preserve that is under the authority of the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD). The District has closed the Nortonville Road, which provided vehicular access to this facility, for security purposes. The trail is open to pedestrians, horses and bicycles. The County road extends from the Black Diamond Regional Preserve to the City limits of Clayton. Public right-of-way does extend south to Mt. Diablo State Park. It is possible to establish a trail/corridor between Mt. Diablo State Park and Black Diamond Regional Preserve that would be under the authority of the East Bay Regional Park District. Such trail/corridor would provide a physical and conceptual linkage between the regional parks and the City's system of greenbelts.

b. **Greenbelts**

Greenbelts occur as a result of creek preservation and provide an elongated or linear space incorporated into natural land forms along creeks and other predominant natural features. Greenbelts provide pathway areas for pedestrian, equestrian and bicycle travel. The pathways provide passive recreation. Additions can be made to the greenbelts to provide active recreation. Picnic areas, par courses and other facilities can be built into the systems through funds generated by new development, government programs and regional park programs. The greenbelts also function as connections between major recreational facilities, residential neighborhoods, commercial areas and school sites. Greenbelts are acquired as flood control setback, as open space through density transfer in PUD's, through parkland dedication and through purchase by public agencies.

Housing along greenbelts should have sufficient setback and site planning so that greenbelts provide access to local streets, allow adequate police protection and prevent a "boxed in" feeling or appearance.

c. **Community Park**

The City has recently developed a 20 acre Ballfields/Community Park Complex. This complex provides three combination baseball/soccer fields and a fourth soccer field. The complex also has sports related facilities (parking, restrooms, concessions) and active play areas (picnic areas, play structures, tot lots). This park is adjacent to Diablo View Middle School and there is a joint use agreement for the fourth soccer field. Such joint use opportunities between park and school use should continue to be pursued in the planning and development of any new school facilities.

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d. **Neighborhood Park**

Neighborhood parks most commonly range in size from 3 to 5 acres. They provide play equipment for children, paved courts, picnic tables, benches and fields for team play. The neighborhood park function under this description is fulfilled by the Lydia Lane Park and the playfield of Mt. Diablo Elementary School. Neighborhood park facilities include play equipment for children, paved courts, par courses, picnic tables, benches and fields for team play.

Some standard park facilities should be added to the greenbelt system. Facility areas will form activity nodes or concentrations within the passive system that will generate additional use.

3. **Quarry (Q)**

Uses allowed under this designation include quarries and accessory structures and uses normally auxiliary to them.

There are no quarries located within the City limits of Clayton; however, the Lone Star quarry is located on the southwestern edge of the community. The quarry produces high quality rock and gravel and the quarry has an expected life in excess of 50 years. There are two negative impacts generated by quarry operation. First, there are occasional blasts to separate the rock and secondly, there is an average of 160 trucks per day traveling along Mitchell Canyon Road. This figure is based on information obtained from Lone Star Quarry. The quarry has taken a series of measures to mitigate its effect upon Clayton.

The quarry is designated as a State resource and cannot be curtailed by local action. It is important to consider the effects of proximity to the quarry prior to granting any change in adjacent land use.

4. **Agriculture (AG)**

Many land owners in the Clayton planning area have entered into the Williamson Act contract with Contra Costa County. The contracts are self-perpetuating 10-year agreements that preclude non-agricultural development. Use of these County designations will reinforce the Preserve Designation used by the County and promote a conservation context to future development analysis on these sites.

Acres to the northeast and east of the City limits include rugged terrain that is primarily used as rangeland for livestock and other similar open uses. The City supports and encourages the continuation of agriculture in these areas. Given the low intensity of agricultural activities, the City encourages large lot zoning of at least 20 to 40 acres to ensure agriculturally viable sized lots.

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The purpose of the Agriculture designation is to preserve and protect lands capable of and generally used for the production of food, fiber and plant materials. The title is intended to be descriptive of the predominant land-extensive agricultural uses that take place in these areas, but the land use title or description shall not be used to exclude or limit other types of agricultural, open space or non-urban uses.

### **Action Plan to Promote Open Space**

1. PUD density transfer and cluster development.
2. Park dedication and in-lieu fees.
3. Support for State and regional parkland acquisition.
4. Flood control and environmental hazard setback and open space dedication.
5. City purchase of sites and greenbelt system links.
6. Development easements.
7. Prepare Appendix H, a Master Parks-Trails and Open Space Plan to unincorporated public open space access links and activity areas.

### **Potential Open Space Measures**

1. Park fund applications.
2. Gift dedication.
3. Purchase - resale.
4. Lighting and landscape district formation.
5. Scenic easement.

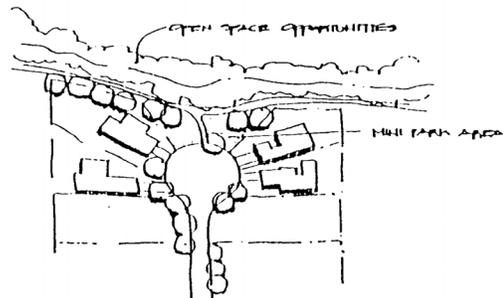
## **RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ELEMENTS**

As a major physical landform within the City, greenbelt concepts extend to policies within land use, circulation, safety/ seismic safety, community design and town center elements.

The greenbelt system must be integrated with the City's circulation system as a secondary non-motorized route. The greenbelt will augment scenic routes by providing landscape borders and corridors.

The greenbelt system is integrated with areas of hazard or development limitation identified in Open Space and Safety Element. The greenbelts provide a major factor in community design and in directing focus into the town center.

The use of the Open Space designation will provide support for the consistency with Safety Elements and Scenic Highway Elements.



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Open Space & Greenbelt Areas

