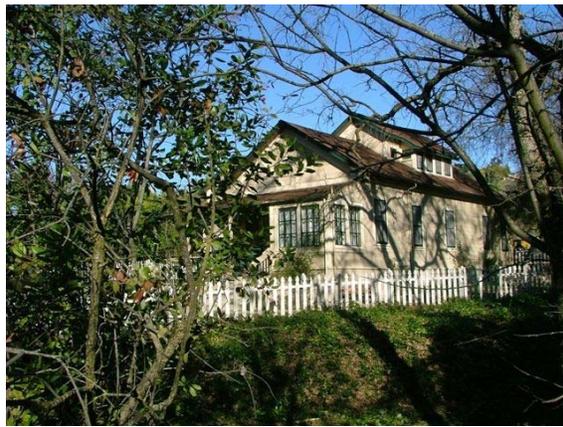
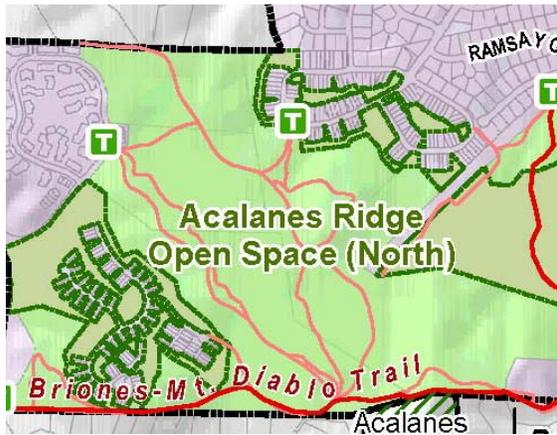
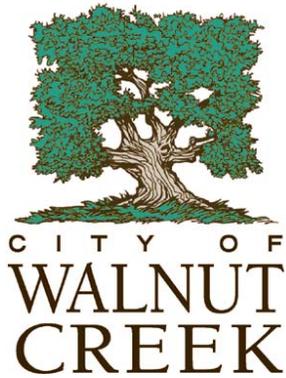


# OPEN SPACE VISION PROJECT REPORT



September 22, 2008

Prepared for:



Prepared by:



# **Open Space Vision Project Report**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

This report results from a process of review, public input and planning for the City of Walnut Creek Open Space System – termed the “Open Space Vision Project.” The Walnut Creek Open Space, a unique 2,700 acre City-owned and operated open space system (the Open Space), was conceived with a citizen’s initiative in 1974 and was formally established in 1976. Over the past 32 years the Open Space has been managed consistent with the vision established in the original guiding plan and policy documents. Because of the tremendous growth and change the City has experienced during this time, City leaders felt it was important to re-visit the vision to ensure it reflects the needs of the public going forward. A visioning process would provide the opportunity to obtain public input on issues that have arisen about some aspects of use, management and improvement of the Open Space.

In 2006 the City adopted a new General Plan, including goals, policies and actions for the Open Space. The General Plan called for some new plans, studies and management practices for which scope, budget, responsibilities and timing need to be resolved. These policies and actions are cross-referenced to the potential solutions identified in this Open Space Vision Project Report (Vision Report).

At its November 6, 2006 meeting, the City’s Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Commission authorized the formation of an Open Space Vision Project Task Force to conduct a public participation process and prepare a report providing an updated vision for the Open Space. The Task Force was to include two members of the PROS Commission, as well as public members who would represent a range of Walnut Creek citizens and Open Space users. The group’s charge was to address basic questions about the 32-year-old Open Space program – what’s working, what’s not – and to frame a vision of what the Open Space should be like in another 30 years. Applications were publicly solicited from Walnut Creek citizens, and from many applicants the two PROS Commission members chose five citizens to represent public interests in the Open Space.

**The Vision Project objective is to frame a vision for the desired future Open Space system, and outline steps to implement that vision.**

The seven member Task Force participated in a series of open meetings over the course of approximately a year, and conducted a widely-advertised survey, with both on-line and written versions, and a series of three public workshops to obtain citizen input.

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The input was overwhelmingly positive, and evidenced a strong sense of ownership of the City Open Space. Open Space Vision Project participants and the Task Force share a strong appreciation of the Open Space as it exists today and a strong desire to preserve that character. They use the Open Space for hiking, bicycling, walking dogs, riding horses and observing nature, and want to enjoy it more in the future. The key benefits repeatedly mentioned were access to natural or wilderness land, ability to get away from the urban setting, protection of native plants and animals, exercise, views, preventing overdevelopment, and protection of water and air quality. There were no major changes of direction indicated – rather resolution of some details and priorities for use, improvements and management, and follow-through in implementing key principles of the original 1970s vision of the Open Space program, and the 2006 General Plan goals and policies.

## **1.2 Open Space Vision Statement**

**Based on the public input and discussions, the Task Force envisions that the City's Open Space will be protected and enhanced to ensure that it remains:**

- **A natural area free of development, with a rich population of native plants and animals, supported by ongoing active stewardship;**
- **Accessible to and used by the public, through well-maintained entries, facilities, trails and visitor programs serving a broad cross-section of users and abilities;**
- **Home to historic ranch and homestead structures and facilities that are protected and well-maintained, as links to the area's past;**
- **A highly valued asset that improves the quality of life for all residents.**

**Open space should be acquired, when possible, and priority should be given to parcels and easements that create habitat corridors and trail connections between preserved lands within and adjacent to the City to create an open space network.**

## **1.3 Relationship to the General Plan**

The General Plan is by state law the City's overarching guiding policy document for a broad range of environmental and planning subjects. City plans, regulations and projects are required to be consistent with the adopted General Plan. This Open Space Vision Report is consistent with the adopted policies of the 2006 General Plan Chapter 3 – *Natural Environment and Public Spaces*, and takes steps toward implementing actions that are adopted in this General Plan chapter. The General Plan policies supersede some of the policies contained in the original guiding plan and policy documents (*Parks, Trail, Conservation and Open Space Plan*, prepared in 1974, and the *Operational*

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*Plan and Policy Guideline for the Walnut Creek Open Space*, prepared in 1978), particularly with respect to the more extensive concepts for recreational facilities and parking that are contained in the original documents. The Open Space Vision Project Report helps implement the General Plan by clarifying some of the specific tasks to implement its policies regarding open space use and management.

#### **1.4 Organization of the Report**

This Vision Report outlines the results of the public participation process in Section 2.0 and recommendations of the Task Force based on public comments and Task Force discussions in Section 3.0. The appendix to the Vision Report provides a detailed breakdown of the public comments received at the workshops and through the online and written surveys.

A separate *Open Space Vision Project Background Report* was prepared prior to the formation of the Task Force to provide complete information on the history, features, users, administration and finances of the Open Space system. It was provided to the Task Force and made available to the public to help inform their comments and discussions. The appendix to the Background Report provides a bibliography of policy and background documents; an analysis of the original 1970s plan and policy documents for the Open Space; relevant policies from the City's General Plan, adopted in 2006; and current Open Space use regulations and policies.

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## **2.0 Public Comments**

The level of the participation in the three public workshops (74) and survey (130) was small relative to Walnut Creek population, but the response was rich in a range of ideas and viewpoints. The relatively low response can also be seen as an indication that people are generally happy with the open space system. If there were major public issues this is likely to have been reflected in higher attendance given the efforts to publicize the Vision Project. There were a number of surveys submitted by the same people who attended the workshops – thus there is a significant repetition of the same comments. But the survey did allow many more people to participate.

Additional community participation will occur in conjunction with the Task Force's report to the PROS Commission and any consideration by the City Council. There would be additional public participation during any subsequent subject-specific studies, plans or discussions suggested by participants and the Task Force. Greater participation may occur at these stages because people are more likely to respond to specific proposals than a general call for input.

### **2.1 Summary of Public Comments by Category**

The public comments from the workshops and survey are categorized below based on frequency. All comments recorded at the 11/10/07, 1/17/08 and 2/9/08 public workshops (74 attendees not including staff, consultants, Task Force members and Open Space Foundation facilitators) and write-in comments from survey questions (130 surveys completed) were condensed and sorted into categories, and listed under the subject headings with the workshop comments.

1. Preservation Priority/Nature Experience: 73 comments plus 47 mentions (the most frequent specific category)
2. Public Facilities: 84 comments plus 23 mentions
  - Trails: 27 comments plus 2 mentions
  - Limit/Reduce Development: 20 comments plus 4 mentions
  - Amenities: 14 comments plus 11 mentions
  - Infrastructure: 8 comments
  - Maintain Historic Structures: 6 comments plus 2 mentions
  - Picnic, Camping: 5 comments plus 4 mentions
  - Other: 4 comments
3. Public Use: 77 comments plus 28 mentions
  - Uses Desired/Undesired: 32 comments plus 28 mentions
  - Use Management: 25 comments
  - Studies/Planning Needed: 20 comments
4. Cattle/Grazing: 55 comments

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5. Public Info/Outreach/Sign: 53 comments
  - Signs: 23 comments
  - Public Information: 16 comments
  - Outreach/Education: 14 comments
6. Natural Habitat/Resource Protection: 51 comments plus 22 mentions
  - Protect/Restore Native Vegetation: 13 comments
  - Manage Invasive Plants: 5 comments
  - Wildlife: 12 comments
  - Environmental Benefit: 9 comments plus 22 mentions
  - Planning and Management: 11 comments
  - Cultural Resources: 1 comment
7. Dogs: 34 comments plus 13 mentions
8. Acquisition of More Open Space: 29 comments
9. Public Access: 24 comments
10. Maintenance: 24 comments
11. Staffing: 18 comments
12. Funding: 13 comments
13. Bikes: 13 comments
14. Accommodating Young People: 12 comments
15. Nature Programs: 11 comments
16. General: 39 comments
17. Other: 2 comments

## **2.2 Summary of Key Issues and Objectives**

The following key issues and objectives were raised through the public comments and the Task Force discussions:

**Preservation and Stewardship.** The highest overall priority is to preserve the Open Space – keep it as it is, without more development. However, the comments went well beyond passive preservation, supporting active and carefully considered stewardship of the Open Space lands and restoration of natural habitats by City staff in cooperation with volunteers, particularly the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation.

There were specific ideas for studies of resources and carrying capacity to support more effective stewardship, and for expanding current restoration efforts, including making more use of volunteers. Participants called for continued protection from development that detracts from the natural character of the Open Space. These comments were very consistent with adopted policies and actions in the 2006 General Plan.

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**Public Access, Use and Facilities.** While preservation and stewardship are top priorities, the open space is very popular with residents, and they want more and better access – trails, parking, and some basic amenities such as restrooms, water, and benches, provided they are consistent with the natural character of the Open Space. There were also comments that the location, extent, design, and maintenance of trails needs to be examined so that they don't impact the resources and they support general user enjoyment. There was also interest expressed in greater ranger presence in enforcing rules and to provide for user safety.

**Cattle Grazing.** The presence of cattle in the Open Space was the most prevalent single issue, with comments primarily relating to impact on the resources and on the trails, and conflict with the users. Many comments called for the removal of cattle from the Open Space, though there were some public and Task Force comments in support of the cattle as representative of agriculture and history. There were specific suggestions for a study and discussion to address the technical issues and community preferences.

**Land Acquisition.** Additional land acquisition was broadly supported for the objectives of connecting habitat corridors and trails between the Open Space areas and adjacent protected lands, and also to prevent development that detracts from its character, especially within or immediately adjacent to the Open Space.

**Historic Facilities.** Residents value the historic ranch and homestead facilities in the Open Space and want to see them preserved, restored, maintained, and used in ways that are consistent with the natural character of the Open Space, such as 4H club and interpretation.

**Public Information and Outreach.** There was a strong theme through the comments and discussion regarding public information and communication. Comments called for more/better trail signs and trailhead information on resources, rules, and the reason for rules. An improved web site and printed materials were mentioned. Expanded efforts were suggested to coordinate and communicate with other open space protection agencies and organizations, other City departments and programs, and specific user groups (particularly dog owners and mountain bicyclists).

**Programs.** Comments supported the expansion of existing staff and docent-led nature and history programs to promote a wider understanding and appreciation of the Open Space, and the natural environment in general, among Walnut Creek residents. Programs for young people were especially desired, including coordination with the schools to allow students to be aware of the open space and appreciate and enjoy its history, resources, and value.

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**Trail Maintenance.** There were comments calling for better maintenance of trails, often linked to the impacts of cattle.

**Funding.** There were comments calling directly for more funding for the Open Space, especially for acquisition. A need for additional funding is indicated by the comments calling for increased stewardship and programs, and maintenance and management of the trails. It is specified in the General Plan policies and was mentioned in public comments that there should be a study and plan for how to fund the desired acquisitions, stewardship, maintenance of facilities, and expansion of programs.

### **2.3 Comment Themes Diagram**

Figure 1 is a “bubble diagram” of the most common public comment categories and the themes and relationships that run through them. This is based on the more detailed summary and analysis of public input contained in the Appendix to the Vision Report. The size of the bubbles approximately reflects the number of comments supporting each idea, with closely related ideas grouped into larger bubbles. Arrows between bubbles show relationships.

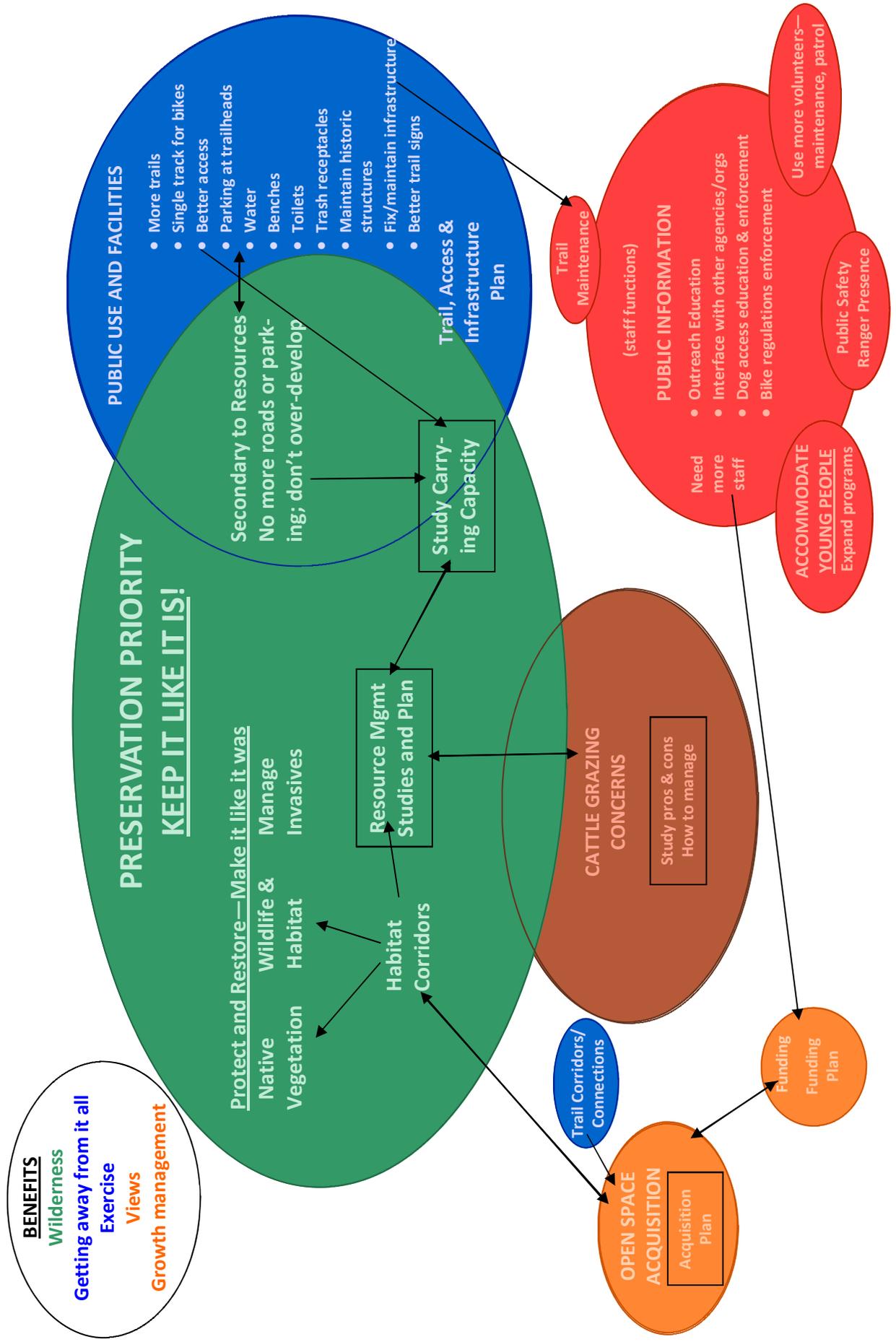
### **2.4 Staff Participation**

Comments and ideas from Open Space staff were generated at meetings held prior to initiating the Task Force and public process, and were incorporated into the *Open Space Vision Project Background Report*. Staff ideas were reviewed in the public workshops, in which staff assisted as facilitators. Staff input is also reflected in existing Open Space Staff Work Program items that are incorporated in the potential next steps.

### **2.5 Detailed Public Comments**

The key issues and objectives identified from public comments and committee discussions are summarized in Section 2.2. Detailed notes from the workshops and results from the surveys, including specific comment wording and comment letters received, are contained in the Vision Report appendix. The Task Force reviewed and carefully considered all the comments in formulating this report to the PROS Commission. All persons who attended the workshops or filled out the survey and provided an email address have been notified of the availability of the public participation results, and the availability of this draft report.

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**Figure 1: Open Space Public Input Themes**



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### **3.0 Recommended Next Steps and Solutions**

The public participation process identified overall community interests and concerns regarding the Open Space (OS), and through the Task Force led to a Vision for the future Open Space system. Implementing the Vision will require steps to resolve potentially conflicting objectives, address specific technical issues and community preferences, and determine scope and budget for desired efforts so they can compete with other City priorities for funding. Section 3 of the report covers the recommended steps, which are summarized in Table 1.

Acceptance of this report is not a commitment to implement the recommended steps, especially where the solutions require significant commitment of staff and budget that is not already a part of the adopted City budget and work program. The Task Force recognizes that the PROS Commission and the City Council must determine through a separate process which of the recommended steps are feasible to pursue considering available resources and competing priorities.

Potential next steps include short term actions and some longer-term studies and plans to implement projects or determine specific courses of action, including additional dialogue with the public regarding these decisions. Several direct initiatives are also included, several of which are already underway. The relevant policies from the 2006 General Plan, Chapter 3 – *Natural Environment and Public Spaces*, are provided for reference. In many cases the recommended steps and solutions are directly implementing these adopted policies. In some cases alternative solutions are identified for an issue (e.g. Recommendation 1, options a., b., etc.), with the simplest or least expensive option first, and more extensive efforts listed thereafter.

#### **Issue or Objective:**

##### **A. Cattle Grazing**

Concern was expressed about impacts of cattle grazing on trails, natural resources, and visitor safety. Many comments called for the removal of cattle from the Open Space, though there were some comments in support of the cattle as representative of agriculture and history. Several comments requested more and/or earlier attention to trail preparation, maintenance and erosion control. Many of these comments were related to the impacts of cattle and horses in wet weather.

**How Identified:** This was the #1 specific issue raised in public workshops and surveys. The solutions are also relevant to comments regarding trail maintenance.

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**Recommended Solutions:**

1. (An interim option): Provide information on maps and signs about where cattle currently graze, and where they do not, so visitors can avoid these areas.
2. Any material proposed changes to cattle operations should be based on a study by a grazing management expert and a public discussion to determine needs and options for management of cattle. Options for such a study include:
  - a. Study consisting of reconnaissance and literature review.
  - b. Study consisting of thorough assessment of grassland suitability and grazing alternatives.
  - c. Complete A2b in context of Resource Management Plan - see item B4 below.

**Related General Plan Policies:**

Action 1.2.3. Monitor and control the factors affecting the habitat value of open space, including trail use and grazing.

**B. Protection of Resources and Nature Experience**

The public desires pro-active and mindful stewardship to protect and restore natural habitats. There was very strong support to make natural resources the priority, “keep the Open Space as it is,” and also to help bring the Open Space to the more natural condition it once was, or should be. There were calls for efforts and studies to manage and restore natural resources, and to limit or control use and facilities so that they do not impact them.

**How Identified:** Nature experience and natural resource protection was the #1 comment category in public workshops and surveys. Many comments under Public Use and Facilities pertained to NOT allowing more use or development, in order to protect these values.

**Recommended Solutions:**

1. Increase volunteer role in stewardship (OS staff is in process of forming volunteer groups).

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2. Provide support for Open Space Foundation habitat restoration projects, through cooperation with staff, provision of storage space, and resident involvement in preservation (facilitated by volunteer program being organized by OS staff - see D.3).
3. Prepare Open Space land use policy/zoning controls for lands adjacent to or within OS, e.g. utility lands to avoid/mitigate obtrusive installations - e.g. antennas and water tanks.
4. Prepare Resource Management Plan(s) for the Open Space (to implement the original OS Plan and Guidelines, or supersede them where inconsistent with current policies): scientific inventories of vegetation and wildlife (including invasive species), soils and erosion, (include grazing study); identification of opportunities and constraints/carrying capacity; plans for protection and restoration, improvement use and location of trails, minor improvements to entries and facilities. Options for such plans include:
  - a. Focused Resource Management Plans (limited scope, and/or one area at a time).
  - b. Comprehensive Resource Management Plan - covers all areas with thorough scope per plans for comparable managed resource areas.

**Related General Plan Policies:**

GOAL 1 Maintain and enhance open space lands.

Policy 1.1. Protect, manage and improve open space lands.

Action 1.1.1. Prepare and adopt a plan for the protection and management of the City's open space lands.

Policy 1.2. Protect and enhance the natural environment.

Action 1.2.1. Identify, protect, restore, and enhance sensitive biological and areas critical for habitat and habitat connectivity. (See Action 2.1.3.)

Action 1.2.2. Strive to eliminate non-native plant species and expand areas with native plants.

Action 1.2.4. Support resource conservation opportunities on private land.

Action 1.3.3. Review and update existing policies for open space activities and monitor their effectiveness.

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**C. Public Access, Use and Facilities**

Minor improvements to public access, uses and facilities are desired, but no major changes or use of Open Space land. Trails are the main user facility that is desired, although there were some comments calling for no changes, and comments calling for review of whether all trails are necessary. There were calls for opening or creating single track trails for bicycles, but also concerns about user conflicts between bicyclists and other users, and for enforcement of rules. New user facilities are generally not desired, except for some amenities as noted, but maintenance of existing historic structures and infrastructure is a priority. These and other potential improvements should be studied in the context of protecting natural resources and the experience of natural Open Space.

**How Identified:** Facilities and public use were #2 and #3 in comment categories. This subject also relates to comments about Access. There was a wide variety of opinion on what is needed, but only minor adjustments are desired - no major changes.

**Recommended Solutions:**

1. Improve trail maintenance, particularly early season maintenance (relates to impacts from cattle and horses).
2. Increase ranger presence in key areas (both geographic and subject-specific) where issues tend to arise.
3. Continue to allocate time and funding to maintaining historic structures, and repairing or upgrading related infrastructure (water, sewer, electric, lighting). Specific projects in current City Maintenance Master Plan include:
  - a. Improve water and septic system at Hanna Grove at Bob Pond, Borges Ranch.
  - b. Restore Borges Ranch hay barn; upgrade electrical service.
  - c. Upgrade electrical system, water, lights, seating at Hanna Grove amphitheater.
  - d. Provide more restrooms - upgrade of restroom at Borges Ranch and development of restrooms at Shell Ridge and Howe Homestead are goals in current Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

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4. Conduct a public discussion of trail use designations for hikers, bicyclists, dog walkers, and equestrians (should be in the context of the opportunities and constraints established by scientific studies in a Resource Management Plan – see B.4 above).
5. Make improvements to the trail system resulting from public discussion and from Comprehensive Resource Management Plan:
  - a. Add, close, or realign trails - change use designations.
  - b. Provide more drinking water sources for trail users (the Task Force recommends this be pursued only where feasible without installation of expensive separate meter).
  - c. Provide benches in appropriate locations.
6. Study and make minor improvements and arrangements to Open Space access routes (including bike and pedestrian access), entries and parking, avoiding use of OS land (e.g. arrange for use of existing adjacent parking).
7. Staff-suggested projects could also be addressed in the context of the above steps, including constructing the Marshall Staging Area (parking area on City-owned property in front of Indian Valley School), paving the Sugarloaf parking area, and study of constructing a loop access road and/or other safety improvements or measures at Borges Ranch.

**Related General Plan Policies:**

Policy 1.3. Promote a variety of appropriate activities on open space lands.

Action 1.3.1. Assess user demand and impacts on open space and natural resources.

Action 1.3.2. Allow on open space lands, only facilities, structures, and activities compatible with conservation, preservation, and education.

Policy 1.4. Provide convenient public access to open space lands and trails.

Action 1.4.1. Secure public access, where possible, to private open space lands.

Action 1.4.2. Provide trailheads, parking areas, gates, and trails that meet generally accepted access standards and are sensitive to neighborhood interests.

Action 4.2.4. Identify equestrian staging areas and add or improve as needed. (See the North Gate Specific Plan.)

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GOAL 4 Provide a system of safe, well-developed, well connected, and well maintained trails.

Policy 4.1. Plan for a full complement of interconnected trails and paths for walkers, joggers, bicyclists, and equestrians, from the regional trails to downtown trails and paths. (See Transportation Action 6.1.1.)

Action 4.1.1. Work with the County, the East Bay Regional Park District, and other agencies to link between residential areas and parks, creeks, transportation, schools, open space, shopping, and various public facilities.

Action 4.1.2. Link adjacent urban or open space trails and nearby open spaces owned by various agencies.

Policy 4.2. Maintain and improve the trails system, including to and within the open space lands.

Action 4.2.3. Monitor trails for signs of environmental degradation and repair the ecosystem along trails where necessary.

Policy 4.3. Promote safety on all trails and on the roads leading to them.

#### **D. Public Information and Outreach**

Comments requested improved outreach, communication and coordination with the public – especially in the form of programs for school children, and with potential partners in open space protection. Comments called for making better use of volunteers.

**How Identified:** Greater coordination with the public and potential partners was mentioned in several categories. More and/or better public information was requested, including signs (some called for fewer signs), maps, web information, and public outreach. This was the #5 overall comment category.

#### **Recommended Solutions:**

1. Provide a more detailed and accurate map of OS lands and trails. The goal of developing new and improved maps, including working GIS/computer-based and public maps has been accomplished in parallel with the Vision Project. The GIS-based maps are valuable for future detailed studies, plans, and special purpose maps.

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A staff goal to develop a general Open Space informational brochure for all sites has been partially accomplished through the preparation of the *Background Report* for the Vision Project.

2. Develop a standard for the Living History Program at Borges Ranch consistent with State Department of Education curriculum (current OS staff project). Develop curriculum-based programs at Sugarloaf and Lime Ridge.
3. Provide additional staff coordination with user and stakeholder groups:
  - a. Neighbors, dog owners, bicyclists (e.g. Walnut Creek Bicycle Advisory Committee, East Bay Bicycle Coalition, Las Lomas and Northgate High School Clubs), equestrians re. wet weather impacts;
  - b. Other agencies, resource or conservation organizations, and City departments;
  - c. OS staff is establishing a volunteer program to facilitate participation in natural history programs, patrol, trail maintenance and public outreach.
4. Update the City OS Website: The Open Space staff Work Program includes a goal to establish a website for the Open Space Division with the following information and capabilities:
  - Program registration;
  - Site access information and virtual trail tours;
  - The ability to update to current conditions or public information;
  - Information on the current status of cattle grazing in the Open Space;
  - Explanation as to why cattle are allowed;
  - What trails/areas are closed and why are they closed;
  - Clarify dog policy, especially for Lime Ridge; and
  - Clear, printable maps.
5. Provide clearer and more complete trail signs or markers, and more/better information at trailheads explaining regulations and reasons behind them. The Open Space staff Work Program includes a goal to develop a consistent standard for signage in the Open Space for vehicle entry areas, kiosks, trail heads, and map boards, with consistent size, verbiage, font size, placement, and overall readability (a sign manual).

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6. Provide an indoor facility for programs and interpretation at Sugarloaf (any improvement plans should be coordinated with a Resource Management Plan and related public discussions).
7. Expand natural history programs to accommodate more people (school programs are currently at capacity and expansion would require funding for more staff).

**Related General Plan Policies:**

Action 1.1.2. Work with other public agencies (such as water districts, adjacent cities, and park districts) in managing, operating, linking and providing access to open space.

Action 4.2.1 Provide consistent, clear signage for all trails and at all trailheads.

Action 4.3.1. Track safety complaints on trails and, where patterns are identified, work with user groups on solutions.

Action 4.3.2. Working with residents and equestrians, respond to identified road/trail (auto/horse) conflicts, including providing improved signage where needed.

**E. Acquisition**

Key public input called for preventing development that intrudes on the Open Space, seeking habitat corridor and trail connections between OS areas, and protecting watershed areas and riparian corridors. There was significant public interest in additional land acquisition in the context of connections and preventing development. Priority would be contiguous habitat and/or trail corridors. The Task Force recognizes that opportunities for large acquisitions are limited, but smaller, more targeted acquisition of property or easements alone or in partnership with other open space entities are possible.

Concord is a potential significant partner in continuous open space, depending on future arrangements for management of the Naval Weapons Station lands. California State University East Bay is another neighbor and prospective partner.

**How Identified:** Specific calls for acquisition were the #8 comment category, but many comments regarding resource protection and trail connections also relate to acquisition.

**Recommended Solutions:**

1. Coordinate with potential acquisition partners: Save Mount Diablo, East Bay Regional Parks, and others.

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2. Prepare an Acquisition Plan: identify and review properties, develop criteria for potential acquisitions, continue to coordinate with partners.
3. Prepare a Funding study/plan, identifying internal and outside funding sources for acquisition and maintenance of properties, including grants.

**Related General Plan Policies:**

GOAL 2 Acquire additional open space lands or conservation easements.

Policy 2.1. Develop a plan for acquiring additional open space lands or conservation easements.

Action 2.1.1. Develop criteria for possible acquisitions of open space lands important to the City.

Action 2.1.2. Identify and maintain a list and map of properties where open space acquisition should be considered.

Policy 2.2. Plan for funding for space acquisition or conservation easements.

Action 2.2.1. Establish mechanisms for funding and maintaining new acquisitions and easements.

Action 2.2.2. Seek grants and other funds for acquisition and development.

Policy 2.3. Support retention as open space of the private open space ranch lands adjoining Mount Diablo State Park.

Action 2.3.1. Work cooperatively with property owners toward retention of open space lands adjacent to Mount Diablo State Park.

Policy 2.4. As development projects arise, strive to preserve existing private open space lands under private ownership, and to provide public access to these private open spaces.

Action 2.4.1. Develop and maintain an inventory of private open spaces and conservation easements.

Action 2.4.2. Encourage conservation easements that provide public access over private lands.

Action 2.4.3. Work cooperatively with developers in securing public access where desirable, without requiring the City to maintain private trails.

Policy 2.5. Acquire private open space lands within development projects only when and where public ownership or access is desirable or necessary.

Action 4.2.2. Promote rancher-friendly conservation and recreational trail easements over key agricultural lands.

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**Table 1: Summary of Issues and Recommended Solutions (4 pages)**

	<b>Issue or Objective</b>	<b>How identified</b>	<b>Potential Solutions</b> (generally listed in order of priority and/or ease of implementing)
<b>A.</b>	<b>Cattle Grazing</b> - Concern about impacts of cattle grazing on trails, natural resources, visitor safety	#1 specific issue raised in public workshops and surveys. Also pertains to comments re. trail maintenance	1. (interim option) Provide information on maps and signs about where cattle currently graze so visitors can avoid them. 2. Any material proposed changes should be based on a study by grazing management expert and public discussion to determine needs and options for management of cattle. a. Study consisting of reconnaissance and literature review. b. Study consisting of thorough assessment of grassland suitability and grazing alternatives. c. Complete A2b in context of Resource Management Plan - see item B4 below.
<b>B.</b>	<b>Protection of Resources and Nature Experience</b> - Public desires proactive and mindful stewardship to protect and restore natural habitats	Nature experience and natural resource protection was the #1 comment category in public workshops and surveys. Many comments under Public Use and Facilities pertained to NOT allowing more use or development	1. Increase volunteer role in stewardship (OS staff is in process of forming volunteer groups). 2. Provide support for Open Space Foundation habitat restoration projects, through cooperation with staff, provision of storage space, and resident involvement in preservation (facilitated by volunteer program being organized by OS staff - see D.3). 3. Prepare Open Space land use policy/zoning controls for lands adjacent to or within OS, e.g. utility lands to avoid/mitigate obtrusive installations - e.g. antennas and water tanks. 4. Prepare Resource Management Plan(s) for the Open Space (to implement the original OS Plan and Guidelines, or supersede them where inconsistent w/ current policies): scientific inventories of vegetation and wildlife (including invasive species), soils and erosion, (include grazing study); identification of opportunities and constraints/carrying capacity; plans for protection and restoration, improvement use and location of trails, minor improvements to entries and facilities: a. Focused Resource Management Plans (limited scope, and/or one area at a time). b. Comprehensive Resource Management Plan - covers all areas with thorough scope per plans for comparable managed resource areas.

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	<b>Issue or Objective</b>	<b>How identified</b>	<b>Potential Solutions</b> (generally listed in order of priority and/or ease of implementing)
<b>C.</b>	<b>Public Access, Use and Facilities</b> - Minor improvements to public access, uses and facilities are desired, but no major changes or use of Open Space land	Facilities and public use were #2 and #3 in comment categories. Also relates to comments about Access. There was a wide variety of opinion on what is needed, but only minor adjustments are desired - no major changes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve trail maintenance, particularly early season maintenance (relates to impacts from cattle and horses).</li> <li>2. Increase ranger presence in key areas (both geographic and subject-specific) where issues tend to arise.</li> <li>3. Continue to allocate time and funding to maintaining historic structures, and repairing or upgrading related infrastructure (water, sewer, electric, lighting). Specific project in current <i>City Maintenance Master Plan</i> include:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Improve water and septic system at Hanna Grove at Bob Pond, Borges Ranch.</li> <li>b. Restore Borges Ranch hay barn; upgrade electrical service.</li> <li>c. Upgrade electrical system, water, lights, seating at Hanna Grove amphitheater.</li> <li>d. Provide more restrooms - upgrade of restroom at Borges Ranch and development of restrooms at Shell Ridge and Howe Homestead are goals in current Capital Improvement Plan.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Conduct a public discussion of trail use designations for hikers, bicyclists, dog walkers, and equestrians (should be in the context of the opportunities and constraints established by scientific studies in the Comprehensive Resource Management Plan).</li> <li>5. Make improvements to the trail system resulting from public discussion and from Comprehensive Resource Management Plan:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Add, close, or realign trails - change use designations.</li> <li>b. Provide more drinking water sources for trail users (where feasible without installation of expensive separate meter).</li> <li>c. Provide benches in appropriate locations.</li> </ol> </li> <li>6. Study and make minor improvements and arrangements to Open Space access routes (including bike and pedestrian access), entries and parking, avoiding use of OS land (e.g. arrange for use of existing adjacent parking).</li> </ol>

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	<b>Issue or Objective</b>	<b>How identified</b>	<b>Potential Solutions</b> (generally listed in order of priority and/or ease of implementing)
<b>D.</b>	<b>Public Information and Outreach</b> - improve outreach, communication and coordination with the public- especially school children; make better use of volunteers	More/better info was requested, including signs (some called for fewer signs), maps, web info, and public outreach. This was the #5 overall comment category	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide a more detailed and accurate map of OS lands and trails (recently completed).</li> <li>2. Develop a standard for the Living History Program at Borges Ranch consistent with State Education curriculum (current OS staff project). Develop curriculum-based programs at Sugarloaf and Lime Ridge.</li> <li>3. Provide additional staff coordination with user and stakeholder groups:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Neighbors, dog owners, bicyclists (e.g. Walnut Creek Bicycle Advisory Committee, East Bay Bicycle Coalition, Las Lomas and Northgate High School Clubs), equestrians re. wet weather impacts;</li> <li>b. Other agencies, resource or conservation organizations, and City departments;</li> <li>c. OS staff is establishing a volunteer program to facilitate participation in natural history programs, patrol, trail maintenance and public outreach.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Update the City OS Website: program registration; site access information and virtual trail tours; ability to update to current conditions or public information; provide clear, printable maps for download.</li> <li>5. Provide clearer and more complete trail signs or markers, and more/better information at trailheads explaining regulations and reasons behind them.</li> <li>6. Provide an indoor facility for programs and interpretation at Sugarloaf (any improvements should be coordinated with Comprehensive Resource Management Plan and related public discussions).</li> <li>7. Expand natural history programs to accommodate more people.</li> </ol>

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	<b>Issue or Objective</b>	<b>How identified</b>	<b>Potential Solutions</b> (generally listed in order of priority and/or ease of implementing)
<b>E.</b>	<b>Acquisition</b> - prevent development that intrudes on the Open Space; seek habitat corridor and trail connections between OS areas	Specific calls for acquisition were #8 comment category, but also relates to resource protection and trail comments. Task Force recognizes that opportunities for large acquisitions are limited	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinate with potential acquisition partners: Save Mount Diablo, East Bay Regional Parks, and others.</li> <li>2. Prepare an Acquisition Plan: identify and review properties, develop criteria for potential acquisitions, continue to coordinate with partners.</li> <li>3. Prepare a Funding study/plan, identifying internal and outside funding sources for acquisition and maintenance or properties, including grants.</li> </ol>