

Conservation Element



INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE ELEMENT

The Conservation Element of the Ojai General Plan was prepared in conformance with State, law and pursuant to the realization of the City of Ojai General Plan overall goals, objectives and policies. The Element identifies natural resources; defines issues pertaining to the preservation of resources; formulates goals and objectives aimed at conservation of resources; and established policies and programs to implement objectives of long-term preservation and wise utilization of resources.

The purpose of the Conservation element is to define the City's resource conservation goals and to establish tools and mechanisms to obtain the desired goals. The Conservation Element, in combination with the Ojai Open Space Element, is formulated to guide the long-term management of the resources within City boundaries and to establish policy guidelines in its planning area. An inventory of these resources is provided in the Ojai Master Environmental Assessment (MEA). From the MEA's resource inventory, goals, policies and programs were formulated to ensure sound management and proper utilization and conservation of all resources of the City and preserved Ojai's unique living environment.

ASSUMPTIONS/DEFINITIONS

The Conservation Element of the Ojai General Plan has been prepared pursuant to requirements of State Law. The Element is in conformance with the overall General Plan goals of the City of Ojai and has been formulated in a manner to implement the goals.

As a premise to the establishment of the General Plan Conservation Element and its goals and policies, an outline of definitions and assumptions used to create the Conservation Element is provided below:

- o Conservation involves a recognition and respect of all the earth's resources, in that their management and preservation is the responsibility of our fellow man for use and appreciation by future generations.
- o Conservation assumes that all things are either existing or potential resources. Most resources are finite and if they are to be expended, it should be done in a prudent and judicious manner.
- o Conservation inherently respects the inter-relationship between needs for utilization and resources. It further establishes priorities which will

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determine how resources will be conserved or utilized for the long-term benefit of all living things.

LEGAL AUTHORITY

Under State Law, a City is responsible for preparing a comprehensive General Plan for the long-term physical development of the City. Section 65302, pertaining to required Elements of the General Plan, states the following:

"The General Plan shall consist of a statement of development policies and shall include a diagram or diagrams and text setting forth objectives, principles, standards, and plan proposals. The Plan shall include the following elements:

A Conservation Element for the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources including water and its hydraulic force, forests, soils, rivers and other waters, harbors, fisheries, wildlife, minerals, and other natural resources. That portion of the Conservation Element including waters shall be developed in coordination with any countywide water agency and with all district and City agencies which have developed, served, controlled, or conserved water for any purpose for the County or city for which the plan is prepared. The Conservation Element may also cover:

- (1) The reclamation of land and water.
- (2) Flood Control.
- (3) Prevention and control of the pollution of streams and other waters.
- (4) Regulation of the use of land in stream channels and other areas required for the accomplishment of the conservation plan.
- (5) Prevention, control, and correction of the erosion of soils, beaches, and shores.
- (6) Protection of watersheds.
- (7) The location, quantity, and quality of the rock, sand, and gravel resources."



The Index Matrix within the Introduction Section of this General Plan provides an index/reference of State General Plan requirements and under which sections of the Ojai General Plan the State requirement is fulfilled.

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ISSUES AND NEEDS

OVERVIEW

The Ojai Master Environmental Assessment (MEA) provides an inventory of all resources in the Ojai Sphere of Influence. Resources are defined, located and evaluated in the MEA text and its associated maps. Issues pertaining to these topics are discussed in this section. Goals, Policies and Implementing Programs for preservation of the following resources are established in the Conservation Element, based on the data of the MEA.

- **GEOLOGICAL RESOURCES**
 - **Important Farmland**
 - **Mineral Resources**
- **WATER/WATERSHEDS**
- **BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**
- **CULTURAL/HISTORIC RESOURCES**
- **AIR QUALITY**
- **SCENIC VIEWS/AESTHETICS {Conservation and Open Space Elements}**
- **RECREATIONAL AMENITIES {Recreation Element}**

General Plan issues that relate to conservation of the above resources are based on the MEA Inventory. Major issues which initiated the Conservation Element's goals and policies are summarized below.

GEOLOGIC RESOURCES

Geologic resources and associated issues in Ojai include:

- **Important Farmlands** utilized in agriculture which are valued as significant soil resources. Preservation of these designated Important Farmland resources is essential for the continuing land use and environmental balance in Ojai.
- **Mineral and Oil Resources** which are valued as significant soil resources.

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Preservation of these important resources is essential for the continuing land use and environmental balance in Ojai.

GOALS, POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTING PROGRAMS

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The following conservation goals, objectives, policies and programs are presented in a manner to enable the reader to perceive the underlying intent of each goal, and to further understand the methods (policies and programs) by which the City will realize the General Plan's conservation goals and objectives. Goals have been established for each Issue/Need previously indicated. Goals related to Scenic Values/Aesthetics and Recreational Resources are contained in the Open Space and Recreation Elements.

GENERAL

IN PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF THE OJAI, IT SHALL BE THE OVERALL GOAL OF THE CITY TO PROVIDE FOR THE PRESERVATION AND PROPER UTILIZATION OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF THE NATURAL LIVING ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE AREA.

Policy: The City shall implement the State requirements for development of a Conservation Element. The Element will be integrated into a unified General Plan that reflects the complex relationship between resources, conservation and community needs.

Program: Continue consideration of State General Plan requirements in formulation of specific conservation and general programs of the General Plan.

Program: Provide an index in the Element of State requirements and reference text where requirements are fulfilled.

Program: Establish appropriate standards and criteria for the conservation and use of natural and cultural resources.

Policy: Identify, locate and evaluate the status of the City's natural and cultural resources as they relate to natural and human needs.

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Program: Maintain an inventory of the City's resources and pursue their conservation.

Program: Utilize the City's Master Environmental Assessment an update it when necessary to maintain an up-to-date inventory and valuation of resources.

Policy: **Identify and evaluate those entities currently responsible for the management of the City's resources as an initial step in the development of a total "conservation system".**

Program: Establish and maintain correspondence and coordination with governmental agencies and other involved organizations in pursuit of programs to conserve natural and cultural resources.

Program: The following agencies and organizations, at a minimum, shall be contacted for their input into the City's Conservation Element. Further, when new programs are considered, applicable agencies shall be contacted for involvement.

- U.S. Forest Service
- California State Department of Conservation
- County of Ventura

Policy: **Formulate a land use pattern that takes optimum advantage of natural and cultural resources in the Ojai Planning Area.**

Program: Integrate all General Plan goals and policies to respect and consider goals and policies of the Conservation Element.

Program: Verify consistency between Land Use designations (specifically open space and recreation) and policies of the Conservation Element pertaining to preservation of resources.

Program: Develop a general plan/zoning matrix chart in the Land Use Element of the General Plan.

Program: Provide general plan conformance sections related to all Elements in any major project staff reports.

Program: Review the Land Use Element at regular intervals to assure compliance with conservation goals.

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GEOLOGIC RESOURCES: IMPORTANT FARMLAND

IN ALL FUTURE DECISIONS, IT SHALL BE THE GOAL OF THE CITY OF OJAI TO PROTECT IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL LANDS FROM FUTURE URBANIZATION.

Policy: **Recognize and incorporate the Ventura County Important Farmlands classification system into City programs pertaining to preservation of agricultural lands.**

Program: Adopt a farmland classification system of all agricultural land within the City Planning Area, and create an "Agricultural Overlay" designation in the General Plan Land Use Element Map that will provide for the preservation of all important farmlands within the City Sphere of Influence. Relevant factors shall be soil type, crop importance and value, location and longevity of agricultural worth.

Policy: **Preserve "Prime", "Statewide" and "Local" agriculturally significant land in agricultural use in large parcels and contiguous geographic areas.**

Program: To the maximum extent feasible, maintain Prime, Statewide and Local farmland parcels to a size of 40 acres or more, and respect recommendations of the MPA pertaining to agricultural preservation.

Program: Incorporate criteria established in the General Plan Land Use Element pertaining to Agricultural Use into a formal Agricultural Conservation Program for preservation and proper utilization of farmland in Ojai.

Program: Promote the preservation of "Unique" Farmland currently in avocado and/or citrus production.

Policy: **Encourage actions such as agricultural zoning and use or the Williamson Act.**

Program: Preserve existing agriculture in isolated areas (i.e. on cultivated hillsides surrounding the community), on flood plains and unique areas capable of average or better than average crop yields.

Program: Make information available at City Hall to all land holders related to the Williamson Act.

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Program: Identify all properties within the City where farm activities take place.

Policy: Encourage conservation of agricultural land in the adjacent and nearby surrounding areas to the City.

Program: The City shall maintain existing programs and pursue cooperative programs with the County of Ventura (i.e. greenbelt agreements) regarding farmland preservation.

Program: The City shall promote cooperation with public and private entities for agricultural preservation.

Policy: The City shall encourage the following activities in agricultural areas:

- o Planting of suitable vegetation for soil stability and to maximize absorption capabilities;
- o Utilization of broad, gentle sloping waterways in agriculture;
- o Prevention of overgrazing;
- o Soils testing on proposed development sites prior to project approval to determine soil type and degree of erosion hazard;
- o Utilization of proper grading techniques in areas in or near agriculture where slopes could be conducive to erosion.

Program: The City shall Support the ongoing programs of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service, California State Department of Conservation, and local Farm Bureau.

Policy: Separate agricultural and urban uses so that efficient agricultural practice (crop dusting, fertilization, mechanical harvesting) can be accomplished without danger or nuisance to residential areas and without adverse effects on sensitive crops.

Program: The City will review its Land Use Element for appropriateness of land designations.

Program: The City will adopt resolutions requesting that the County zone

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all important farmland within the Area of Interest for agricultural use with a minimum lot size of 40 acres.

GEOLOGICAL RESOURCES: MINERAL

PRESERVE MINERAL AND OIL RESOURCES WITHIN THE CITY AND ITS AREA OF INTEREST.

Policy: The City shall identify and locate important mineral and oil resources in the area and discourage urbanization of those areas.

Program: A "Mineral Resources Overlay" shall be incorporated into the General Plan for long-term conservation of land that has mineral and oil resources. The location, type and importance of the resource as identified and evaluated in the Ojai MEA shall be used as the basis of the Overlay.

Policy: The City of Ojai shall discourage any use or excavation of mineral and oil resources within the City and its Area of Interest.

Program: The City shall not approve or encourage any development of mineral and oil extraction activity within the City and its Area of Interest.

Program: The "Mineral Resources Overlay" shall be the identification basis of preservation areas discussed above. No development will be allowed in areas identified with a mineral resource value.

Program: The City shall adopt a resolution requesting that the County prohibit mineral and oil resource recovery within the Ojai Area of Interest.

WATER/WATERSHEDS

THE CITY OF OJAI SHALL STRIVE TO PRESERVE THE QUANTITY AND ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF WATER RESOURCES THAT MAY AFFECT THE OJAI VALLEY.

Policy: The City shall ensure that adequate supplies of water be available to all City residents and uses requiring water.

Program: Coordination between the City and all water agencies and companies shall be maintained and the City shall work together with any involved entities to enhance the quality and quantity of water in the Ojai Valley.

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Policy: The City shall identify the sources and availability of water, flood potential, and sources of potential damage to the City's water supply and quality in order to maintain the optimum quality of water in the City and its watershed.

Program: The City shall continuously or periodically update its data relating to water supply and quality in the Ojai Valley.

Program: The Ojai MEA shall be periodically updated to ensure a current data inventory of:

- o sources and availability of water;
- o flood control hazard areas;
- o erosion areas and erosion control measures;
- o drainage systems;
- o protection of watersheds;
- o affected and interested water agencies in the Valley;

Policy: The City shall strive to protect natural watersheds, drainage beds and water recharge areas and rebuild those damaged to achieve recovery of local water and the preservation of water systems.

Program: The MEA shall identify these areas and the City shall prohibit development within or adjacent to any areas that may be associated with water resource or distribution values.

Program: The Open Space Element shall identify all significant natural watersheds, drainage beds and recharge areas for consideration as permanent open space.

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

THE OVERALL GOAL OF THE CITY OF OJAI SHALL BE TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE ALL SIGNIFICANT BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES.

IN PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF OJAI IT SHALL BE THE

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OBJECTIVE OF THE COMMUNITY TO:

1. ALLOW NO LOSS OF EXISTING RESOURCE VALUE, WITH THE INTENTION OF PROTECTING RESOURCES THAT ARE UNIQUE AND/OR IRREPLACEABLE IN THE REGION.
2. ALLOW NO NET LOSS OF IN-KIND RESOURCE VALUE (WHILE MINIMIZING LOSS OF EXITING RESOURCE VALUE), INTENDING TO PROTECT RESOURCES WHICH ARE RELATIVELY SCARCE, OR ARE BECOMING SCARCE ON A REGIONAL BASIS.
3. MINIMIZE LOSS OF RESOURCE VALUE, INTENDING TO PROTECT RESOURCES WHICH ARE RELATIVELY ABUNDANT, BUT ARE IMPORTANT OR ARE OF MODERATE VALUE TO REGIONAL ECOSYSTEMS.

Policy: Identify and protect biological resources within the City and its Area of Interest.

Program: Establish an inventory in the Ojai MEA that identifies important biological resources in the region, categorizes biological resources as associated habitat areas and ranks areas within the City Planning Area according to biological sensitivity (i.e. high, moderate, or low biological significance).

Program: Disallow development and urbanization in areas having biological resources (identified in the Ojai MEA with high or moderate significance) or in areas nearby these identified areas.

Program: Coordinate with local and regional agencies, organizations and citizens to preserve to the maximum extent feasible, the Ojai Valley's biological diversity and natural health.

Program: Pursue correspondence with local and regional agencies organizations and citizens to obtain biological information and educate the public on matters pertaining to biological resources, values and the importance of natural diversity and its overall long-term benefits.

Program: The City shall have available to the public all information contained in the MEA pertaining to biological resources in the area, and shall encourage the use of the information for use in public education.

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Program: The City will consult the Department of Fish and Game and the current Habitat Conservation Plan in order to formulate appropriate mitigation strategies prior to the approval of development in any area designated with high or moderate significance in the MEA.

Policy: The City will require a biological investigation prior to development within any habitat areas identified in the Ojai MEA. The study will focus on the condition of the habitat, the abundance and diversity of wildlife and relative biological significance of the area.

Policy: The City shall preserve to the extent feasible all Oak and Sycamore trees within and adjacent to the community.

Program: The City will continue to enforce the Tree Removal Permitting process.

Program: The City will develop circulation standards respective of all biological resources.

Program: The City will prohibit modification of significant water sources.

Policy: It shall be the policy of the City of Ojai to allow no loss of existing resource value for rare, endangered and unique species habitat, except to provide for the maintenance of flood control facilities.

Program: Identify /delineate the extent of existing habitat area and preserve as permanent open space.

Program: The City will consult the State Department of Fish and Game (DFG), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), in accordance with the intended goals of the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 and California Endangered Species Act of 1970, and other qualified biologists to determine the need for additional species-specific actions. Such actions may include:

- o Screening and setbacks from habitat areas, as in the case of highly sensitive wildlife species, to allow continued use of entire habitat available;
- o Upon reviewing development applications the City should consider the use of fencing or other means of controlling access to habitat areas, as in the case of fragile flora or wildlife habitat.

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Program: The City will review the Open Space and Land Use Elements and designate these rare, endangered and unique species habitat areas for open space uses only.

Policy: **It shall be the policy of the City of Ojai to allow no loss of existing resource value for regionally significant Oak Woodland/Savannah.**

Program: The City will prepare an oak and sycamore tree preservation and management plan to identify/delineate the extent of existing habitat and to provide specific guidelines for their preservation as permanent open space. Preparation of the plan should include consultation with DFG through required notification process (Sections 1601-1606, California Fish and Game Code) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) permit process (Section 404, Clean Water Act), if applicable, to determine additional protective actions, such as:

- o The use of fencing and other means of controlling access and disturbance to maintain values of the habitat;
- o Diversions or control of increased flood runoff from adjacent and upstream urban developments to prevent the scouring of bottom and bank vegetation;
- o Maintenance of existing water supply for the continued support of habitats.

Note: In some cases, these measures may not be adequate or feasible due to the presence of irreplaceable flora or physical habitat features.

Program: The City will review the Recreation, Open Space and Land Use Elements of the General Plan and designate those regionally significant Oak Woodland/Savannah areas for Open Space, Recreation and/or low density residential uses.

Policy: **The City shall allow no loss or the existing resource value or regionally significant riparian habitat.**

Program: The City will prepare a riparian preservation and management plan to identify/delineate the extent of existing habitat and provide specific guidelines to preserve as permanent open space. Preparation of the plan should include consultation with DFG through required notification process (Sections 1601-1606, California Fish and Game Code) and the U.S.

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Fish and Wildlife Service pursuant to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) permit process (Section 404, Clean Water Act), if applicable, to determine additional protective actions, such as:

- o Setbacks and edge screening of adjacent development to allow continued use of entire habitat available by wildlife;
- o The use of fencing and other means of controlling access and disturbance to maintain habitat values;
- o Diversions or control of increased flood runoff from adjacent and upstream urban developments to prevent the scouring of bottom and bank vegetation;
- o Maintenance of existing water supply for the continued support of habitats.

Program: The City will review the Recreation, Open Space and Land Use Elements and designate these riparian habitat areas for Open Space and/or Recreational uses.

Policy: It will be the policy of the City of Ojai to allow in Woodland/Brushland Ecotone areas no loss or existing resource value within "core" oak woodland and sycamore tree areas while minimizing/limiting loss or remaining existing resource value.

Program: The City will preserve 60 percent of its brushland habitats, according to the following guidelines:

- o Retain brushland habitats in large (40 acres minimum), contiguous habitat configurations.
- o Retain corridors/links of native vegetation between habitat enclaves.
- o Include oak/riparian buffer zones as a portion of the area preserved.
- o Place lowest intensities of use, greenbelts or recreation open space adjacent to preservation areas.

Program: The City will review the Open Space, Recreation and Land Use Elements and designate these Woodland/Brushland Ecotone areas for Open Space, Recreation and/or Low Density Residential uses.

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Policy: It will be the policy of the City of Ojai to minimize loss of resource value of locally significant stands of oak and sycamore trees.

Program: The City will retain for aesthetic and cultural value significant stands of oak and sycamore trees. Following are guidelines for developing in and around such trees.

- The area within the dripline of oak trees should not be disturbed.
- No impervious surfaces should be placed beneath these trees that will prevent soil aeration and root respiration.
- To avoid root-rot and disease, no landscape ground covers requiring year round irrigation shall be planted on new development parcels.
- Grading around oak and sycamore trees should not change the ground grade and drainage patterns in order to avoid the impoundment of water and subsequent root rot.
- Heavy equipment should not be operated beneath oaks and sycamores in order to avoid soil compaction and root suffocation.
- Trenching for the installation of utilities should avoid the root zone of oak and sycamore trees.

Program: The City will review the Recreation, Land Use and Open Space Elements and designate these oak and sycamore tree habitat areas for open space recreation and/or low density residential uses.

Policy: It shall be the policy of the City of Ojai to minimize the loss of resource values of locally significant stands of native brush land consistent with the best practiced methods for fire protection.

Program: The City will retain 20 percent of brushland areas as natural open space in the form of a network of contiguous corridors, preferably around and along drainage Courses. Individual corridors to be retained in natural condition must be no less than 100 feet wide in order to be effective.

Program: The City will review the Recreation, Open Space and Land Use Elements to allow only open space, recreation and low density residential land uses in these native brushland areas.

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CULTURAL RESOURCES

IT SHALL BE THE OVERALL GOAL OF THE CITY TO PROVIDE THE LONG-TERM PRESERVATION OR PROPER SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION OF ALL KNOWN AND POTENTIAL CULTURAL RESOURCES WITHIN THE OJAI AREA OF INTEREST.

Policy: The City shall develop programs to identify and analyze known cultural resources, attempt to discover potential resources and plan for their appropriate examination and disposition.

Program: An updated record/literature search and an on-foot archaeological survey (where warranted) will be conducted in conjunction with the preparation of any development proposal provided that an adequate survey has not been conducted previously.

Program: A limited test-level investigation will be conducted for all cultural resource sites that have not previously undergone adequate testing prior to the approval of any development proposals with the immediate area.

Program: Within any development proposal area, a mitigation program for cultural resource will be formulated and implemented prior to the issuance of any grading or demolition permit.

Program: Archaeological monitoring during grading will be required in areas where significant cultural resources have been identified or are expected to occur.

Policy: The City shall attempt to preserve all Historical buildings/resources designated by the City Council and shall strive to identify and preserve potential historical resources.

Program: The City shall prepare and maintain a historical resources inventory that identifies and evaluates historical resources in the City.

Program: No demolition or alteration of designated historical buildings or properties shall occur in the City unless they are declared unsafe by the City or unless notice has been given consistent with City Ordinances. This program shall be adhered to by verification prior to the issuance of a demolition permit. Historical resources shall be registered and preserved, according to appropriate Federal, State and/or Local guidelines, for the long-term benefit of City residents.

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AIR QUALITY

IT SHALL BE THE OVERALL GOAL OF THE CITY TO ELIMINATE ALL AIR POLLUTANTS IN OJAI VALLEY.

Policy: Respect the Ventura County Air Quality Management Program (AQMP) by incorporating the procedures, requirements and standards of the AQMP into City policy.

Program: The City of Ojai shall respect the County of Ventura AQMP and require compliance as a minimum of any development project with the AQMP prior to approval.

Program: The City Housing and Land Use Elements shall be reviewed for consistency in accordance with State Law. Said review shall always respect Conservation Element goals.

Program: The City of Ojai will respect and adopt provisions of the Federal Clean Air Act, associated State Air Resources Board requirements and pursuant County of Ventura Air Quality Management Program.

Policy: The City will monitor and control growth and development that can inhibit air quality goals.

Program: The City shall review all development applicants in the community via the Growth Management Ordinance.

Program: The City shall continue cooperative programs with Ventura County to the extent feasible in the review of development applications.

Program: Provisions of the City Growth Management Plan (Ordinance No. 571) and other applicable ordinances in the City of Ojai shall supersede the County AQMP in limiting growth and development in Ojai where said ordinances apply more stringent standards to the preservation of air quality.

Policy: The City shall support any regional effort to improve air quality throughout Ventura County and State of California.

Program: The City shall cooperate with, and provide assistance to, regional agencies, when necessary, during efforts to obtain data in regional activities for quality improvement programs.

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SCENIC VIEWS/ AESTHETICS

(Also refer to the Open Space Element of the Ojai General Plan).

IT SHALL BE THE OVERALL GOAL OF THE CITY TO PRESERVE THE AESTHETICALLY PLEASING ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL SCENIC BEAUTY THROUGHOUT THE OJAI VALLEY.

Policy: The City shall not support any activity associated with the degradation or the natural scenic character of the Ojai Valley and shall actively pursue the preservation of vistas and natural beauty of the Ojai whenever possible.

Program: View corridors, prominent visual amenities in the Valley (including Topa Topa Ledge and Chief Peak) and other aesthetic amenities shall be identified as natural resources in the Ojai MEA. These resources and surrounding or affected areas shall be preserved as natural open space whenever possible.

Policy: Preserve the natural features of the Valley and general environmental characteristics of the hillside areas with minimum disturbance to native habitat.

Program: Promote the identification of buffer areas between any identified natural or aesthetic resources and urban development.

Program: A "Scenic Overlay" shall be incorporated into the General Plan. The Overlay shall be used as reference material and resources data base in the preparation and evaluation of environmental documents pertaining to development proposals in Ojai.

Policy: The City shall recognize local and regional efforts and programs regarding preservation of natural and scenic resources and shall utilize all available techniques to preserve these resources in the Ojai Valley.

Program: The City shall explore methods in the State of California Constitution and Codes to pursue public easements and other manners in which to preserve scenic resources.

Program: Article 13b, Section 8 of the State Constitution aimed to preserve open space for its use and enjoyment of natural resources and scenic beauty and recreation shall be implemented in the City of Ojai.

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Further, open space easements as allowed under State Code shall be pursued (see also Ojai Open Space Element).

RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

(Refer to the Recreation Element of the Ojai General Plan)