

8

Open Space and Conservation

San Ramon's beautiful settings—the surrounding hills, ridges, creeks, and canyons are highly cherished by residents. These open space resources are important, not only for aesthetic value, but also for environmental quality, character, habitat protection, recreation, water resources, and agriculture. These many functions of open space underscore the importance of careful land use planning.

In 1999, Measure G mandated the preparation of a new General Plan based on the principles of smart growth. A key component of this mandate was the preparation of a plan for the acquisition of ridgeline areas and agricultural lands contiguous to the City of San Ramon. These lands are to be preserved for open space purposes in perpetuity. In response to this mandate, this element of the General Plan includes an open space action plan that creates a structure for implementation by establishing and strengthening partnerships and coordination with relevant groups and agencies, securing funding sources, and establishing preservation priorities.

This element also encourages rural conservation through compatible development that preserves natural features, sensitive habitats, and agricultural resources. Water quality is also a key component of conservation and the quality of life in San Ramon. As such, this element includes policies to preserve and enhance water quality in the San Ramon Planning Area by working closely with responsible regional agencies and by incorporating these considerations into land use planning decisions. Finally, the preservation of archaeological, paleontological, and historic resources is also an important goal of this General Plan, and relevant policies are included in this element.

8.1 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES IN SAN RAMON

Preparation of a habitat protection plan may be required by General Plan Land Use Element Implementing Policy 4.6-1-7 as part of the development review process where rural development could affect potentially sensitive habitat areas, sensitive habitat species, etc. Sensitive habitat resources are outlined below and illustrated in Figure 8-1a and Figure 8-1b.

VEGETATION

Natural vegetation throughout the San Ramon Planning Area is typical of that occurring in the coast ranges and interior valleys of central California. Non-native grassland is the dominant vegetation type throughout the area with perennial species occurring infrequently on ridgetops and east-facing slopes. Scattered oak savannahs, comprised of mostly deciduous oak species, occur in grasslands at middle elevations while live oak woodland is best suited to the moister north- and east-facing hillsides. Denser oak woodland occurs along drainages and riparian habitat, often in combination with arroyo willow riparian forest. Chaparral or scrub

vegetation occurs on dry south and west facing slopes and along margins or openings in oak woodland at higher elevations. Freshwater emergent vegetation is associated with perennial standing water and seeps, which are scattered throughout the area.

SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES

Special-status species are those animal and plant species that, in the judgment of the resource agencies, trustee agencies, and certain non-governmental organizations, warrant special consideration in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process. This includes the following species:

- Officially designated “threatened,” “endangered,” or “candidate” species federally listed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act.
- Officially designated “rare,” “threatened,” “endangered,” or “candidate” species state listed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and protected under the California Endangered Species Act. CDFW also maintains a list of “Fully Protected” species as well as “California Special Concern” species that are also generally included as special-status species under CEQA.
- Species considered rare, threatened, or endangered under the conditions of Section 15380 of the CEQA Guidelines, such as plant species identified on lists 1A, 1B, and 2 in the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California.
- Bat species listed as Medium or High Priority by the Western Bat Working Group.
- Other species considered sensitive, such as nesting birds listed in the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), which includes most native birds, and plants included in lists 3 and 4 in the CNPS Inventory.

Plant Species

Four special-status plant species have been recorded as occurring within the San Ramon Planning Area boundaries. Recorded occurrences are shown on Figure 8-1a. The species include:

- Congdon’s tar plant
- Diablo helianthella
- Mt. Diablo buckwheat
- San Joaquin spearscale

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SPECIAL STATUS PLANT SPECIES

Source: Data is compiled from the CA Natural Diversity Database and is not a complete inventory of the special-status species in the Planning Area.

-  Congdon's tar plant
-  Mt. Diablo buckwheat
-  Diablo helianthella
-  San Joaquin spearscale

LEGEND

SENSITIVE HABITAT AREAS

-  Riparian Forest
-  Non-Native Grassland
-  Northern Coyote Brush/
Diablan Sage Scrub
-  Oak Savannah
-  Oak Woodland

Source: Data is compiled from the CA Natural Diversity Database and is not a complete inventory of the special-status species in the Planning Area.

DEVELOPED & PLANNED AREAS

-  Rural Developments
-  Built and Planned Urban Land
-  Creek

POLITICAL BOUNDARIES *

-  Urban Growth Boundary
-  City Limits
-  Sphere of Influence
-  Planning Area Boundary
-  County Boundary

* The locations of political boundaries are shown adjacent to each other for ease of identification. Actual political boundaries are coterminous when shown as contiguous, parallel, or overlap.

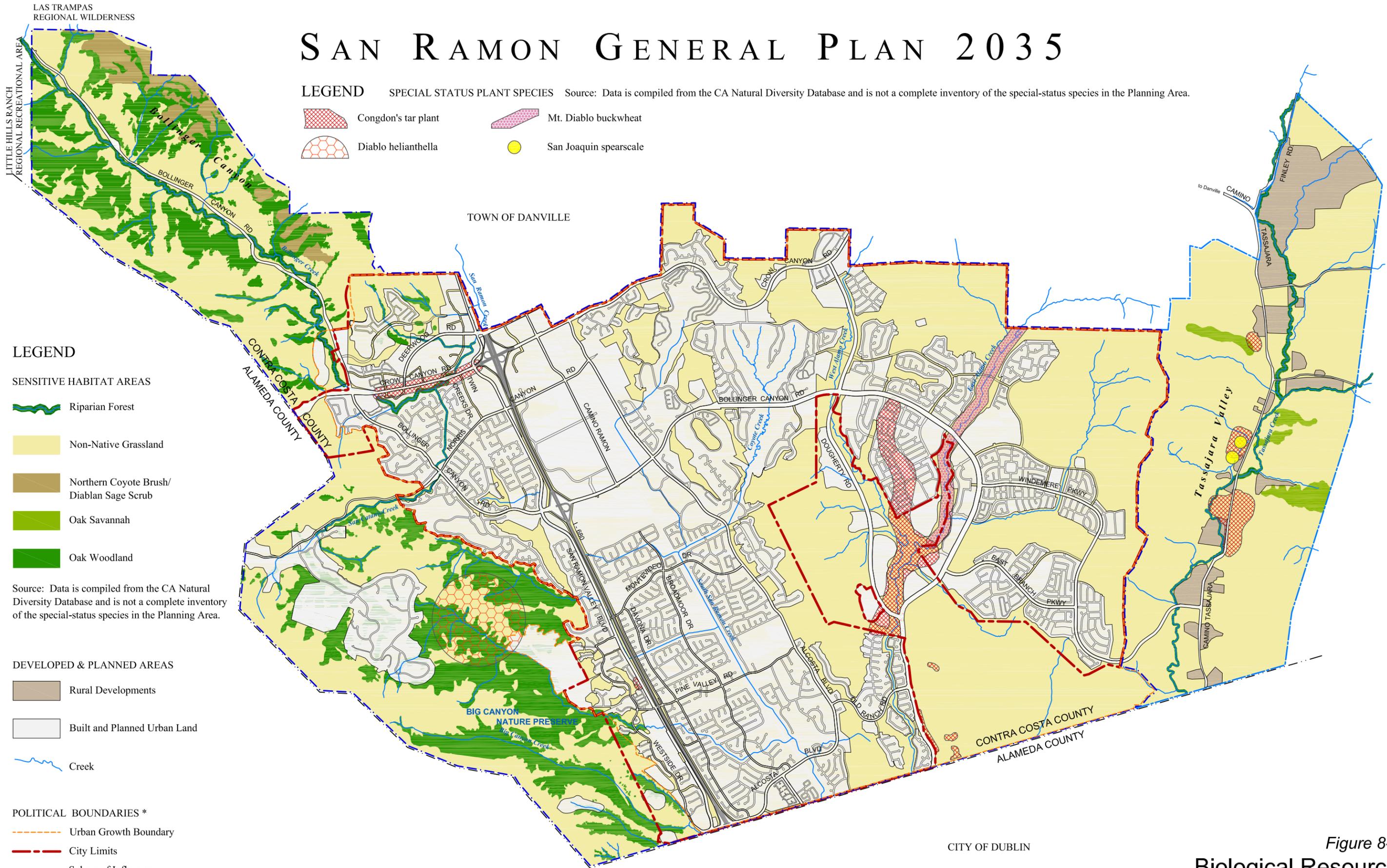
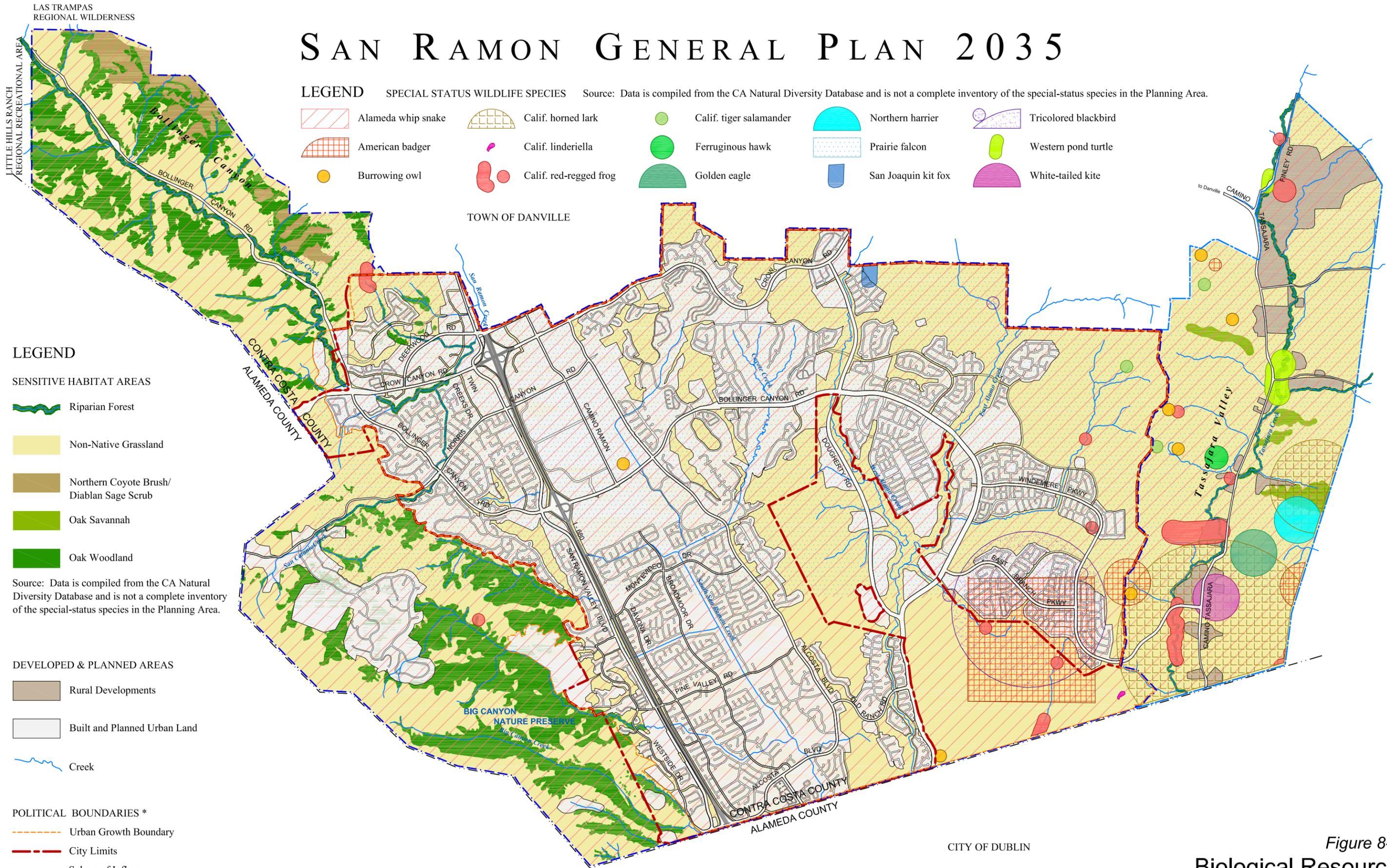


Figure 8-1a
Biological Resources
Special Status Plant Species

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LEGEND SPECIAL STATUS WILDLIFE SPECIES Source: Data is compiled from the CA Natural Diversity Database and is not a complete inventory of the special-status species in the Planning Area.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Alameda whip snake | Calif. horned lark | Calif. tiger salamander | Northern harrier | Tricolored blackbird |
| American badger | Calif. linderella | Ferruginous hawk | Prairie falcon | Western pond turtle |
| Burrowing owl | Calif. red-regged frog | Golden eagle | San Joaquin kit fox | White-tailed kite |

- LEGEND**
- SENSITIVE HABITAT AREAS**
- Riparian Forest
 - Non-Native Grassland
 - Northern Coyote Brush/ Diablan Sage Scrub
 - Oak Savannah
 - Oak Woodland
- Source: Data is compiled from the CA Natural Diversity Database and is not a complete inventory of the special-status species in the Planning Area.
- DEVELOPED & PLANNED AREAS**
- Rural Developments
 - Built and Planned Urban Land
 - Creek
- POLITICAL BOUNDARIES ***
- Urban Growth Boundary
 - City Limits
 - Sphere of Influence
 - Planning Area Boundary
 - County Boundary

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Figure 8-1b
Biological Resources
Special Status Wildlife Species

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Wildlife Species

Fifteen special-status wildlife species have been recorded as occurring within the San Ramon Planning Area boundaries. Recorded occurrences are shown on Figure 8-1b. The species include:

- Alameda whip snake
- American badger
- California horned lark
- California linderiella
- California red-legged frog
- California tiger salamander
- San Joaquin kit fox
- Burrowing owl
- Ferruginous hawk
- Golden eagle
- Northern harrier
- Prairie falcon
- Tricolored blackbird
- Western pond turtle
- White-tailed kite

DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Under General Plan policies, any rural residential development proposed in Bollinger Canyon and the Westside subareas, both of which are primarily designated Rural Conservation and Hillside Residential by the General Plan, would have to ensure minimal disruption or loss of habitat that could support special-status animal species. Clustering of residential development to preserve such habitat would be required within the Hillside Residential designation and encouraged within the Rural Conservation designation, as proposed in the policies of the Land Use Element. A habitat protection plan may be required for development that could potentially affect sensitive habitat, sensitive habitat species, etc. and along with required CEQA mitigation measures will ensure that any biological resources are protected.

GUIDING POLICY

8.1-G-1 Protect and maintain the quality of biological resources in the San Ramon Planning Area, while also balancing the needs of growth and development.

IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

8.1-I-1 Continue to require new land use and development activities to comply with applicable laws and regulations concerning special status species.

Applicable laws and regulations include the Federal Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the California Endangered Species Act, and California Fish and Game Code.

8.1-I-2 When special status species and/or critical habitat may be adversely affected by land use or development activities, require appropriate and feasible mitigation measures in accordance with regulatory agency guidance.

- 8.1-I-3 Monitor and, as appropriate, engage regulatory agencies on any proposals to designate critical habitat and/or other special-status species protection designations within the Planning Area.

USFWS has proposed several extensive critical habitat designations in the San Francisco Bay Area in recent years. New land use and development activities within critical habitat designations are often subject to lengthy consultation and permitting requirements. Given the economic implications of critical habitat designations, the intent of this policy is to ensure that San Ramon is informed about any such proposals and has the ability to be engaged in the decision making process.

- 8.1-I-4 Ensure that the rights of private property owners are considered during the biological review process and encourage mutually acceptable solutions to special status species and/or critical habitat protection.

Most of the lands where special status plant and wildlife species may occur are in private ownership in the Planning Area. This policy is intended to acknowledge that special-status species protection measures may have implications on private property rights and, therefore, mutually acceptable solutions should be sought whenever possible.

8.2 OPEN SPACE INVENTORY

Growth in San Ramon has included the preservation of steep hillsides and ridges in the area. West of the City, undeveloped land, including peaks rising 1,400 feet above the valley floor, form an impressive backdrop for San Ramon. Several specific plans throughout the City (Westside, Dougherty Valley, and Northwest) reflect the importance of open space protection in the City by setting aside a significant amount of their respective plan areas as open space. There is more than 3,500 acres of land designated as open space within the City limits, including portions of Dougherty Valley, set aside as a condition of development approval. Many of these designated open space lands consists of the undeveloped ridges and hills that ring the Valley.

CLASSIFICATION OF OPEN SPACE

State planning law provides a structure for the preservation of open space by identifying the following open space categories:

- Open space for public health and safety including, but not limited to, areas that require special management or regulation due to hazardous or special conditions. This type of open space might include earthquake fault zones, unstable soil areas, floodplains, watersheds, areas presenting high fire risks, areas required for the protection of water quality and water reservoirs, and areas required for the protection and enhancement of air quality. In addition to Figure 8-1a and Figure 8-1b, the Safety Element includes open space classified as Geotechnical Hazards (Figure 9-1), Flood Zone Hazards (Figure 9-2), and Wildfire Hazards (Figure 9-3).
- Open space for the preservation of natural resources including, but not limited to, areas required for the preservation of plant and animal life, including: habitat for fish

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and wildlife species; areas required for ecologic and other scientific study purposes; rivers, streams, bays and estuaries; coastal beaches, lakeshores, banks of rivers and streams; and watershed lands.

- Open space used for the managed production of resources including, but not limited to, forest lands, rangeland, agricultural lands and areas of economic importance for the production of food or fiber; areas required for recharge of ground water basins; bays, estuaries, marshes, rivers and streams that are important for the management of commercial fisheries; and areas containing major mineral deposits, including those in short supply.
- Open space for outdoor recreation including, but not limited to, areas of outstanding scenic, historic and cultural value; areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, including access to lakeshores, beaches, and rivers and streams; and areas that serve as links between major recreation and open-space reservations, including utility easements, banks of rivers and streams, trails, and scenic highway corridors.

Figure 8-2 illustrates a composite of these open space uses as defined in state law. Open space lands within the City include a variety of site-specific characteristics and are programmed for a range of land use activities from rural residential, passive recreational activities, agricultural production to private and public open space such as conservation areas and Geologic Hazard Abatement Districts (GHADs). Many of these open space properties are designated for conservation purposes, with little or no land use activities allowed, others have been used for purposes such as rural residential, cattle grazing or recreation (e.g. Little Hills Ranch).

The combination of open space lands associated with the different lands use designations all help shape and limit the land form and meet open space objectives, such as creating and preserving greenbelts and open space corridors that implement community design goals and objectives. Regardless of the site-specific activities and characteristics, these opens space resources, especially on the urban perimeter, serve to supplement the established Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) concepts by creating buffers and transition areas between urban and rural areas.

8.3 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Conservation and protection of natural open space and scenic resources has always been and continues to be a vital goal to the quality of life and community character provided in the City of San Ramon. Open space areas shown on Figure 8-2 are lands that have been designated as open space resources for future conservation and preservation within the Planning Area. These land uses include, but are not limited to, rural residential, resource conservation areas and Geologic Hazard Abatement Districts.

RESOURCE CONSERVATION OVERLAY DISTRICT

In 1988, the City adopted the Resource Conservation Overlay District (RCOD). The RCOD was one of the City's first set of comprehensive open space regulations implemented through the Zoning Ordinance. In 1990, the San Ramon electorate circulated and qualified an

initiative petition, which the City Council adopted as Ordinance 197, that required land within the City limits, or land annexed to the City, above the 500-foot elevation limit to be subject to the Resource Conservation Overlay District (RCOD). The principles of Ordinance 197 were, during subsequent years, strengthened, implemented, and integrated into the Zoning Ordinance. As a result of the expiration of Ordinance 197 on December 31, 2010, General Plan 2030 continues the City's history of open space conservation and protection by restricting development adjacent to ridgelines, on steep slopes, and along creek corridors.

Figure 8-3 shows lands subject to the hillside, creek, and ridgeline regulations of the Resource Management Division of the Zoning Ordinance and identifies the approximate locations of ridgelines and creeks.

GEOLOGIC HAZARD ABATEMENT DISTRICTS

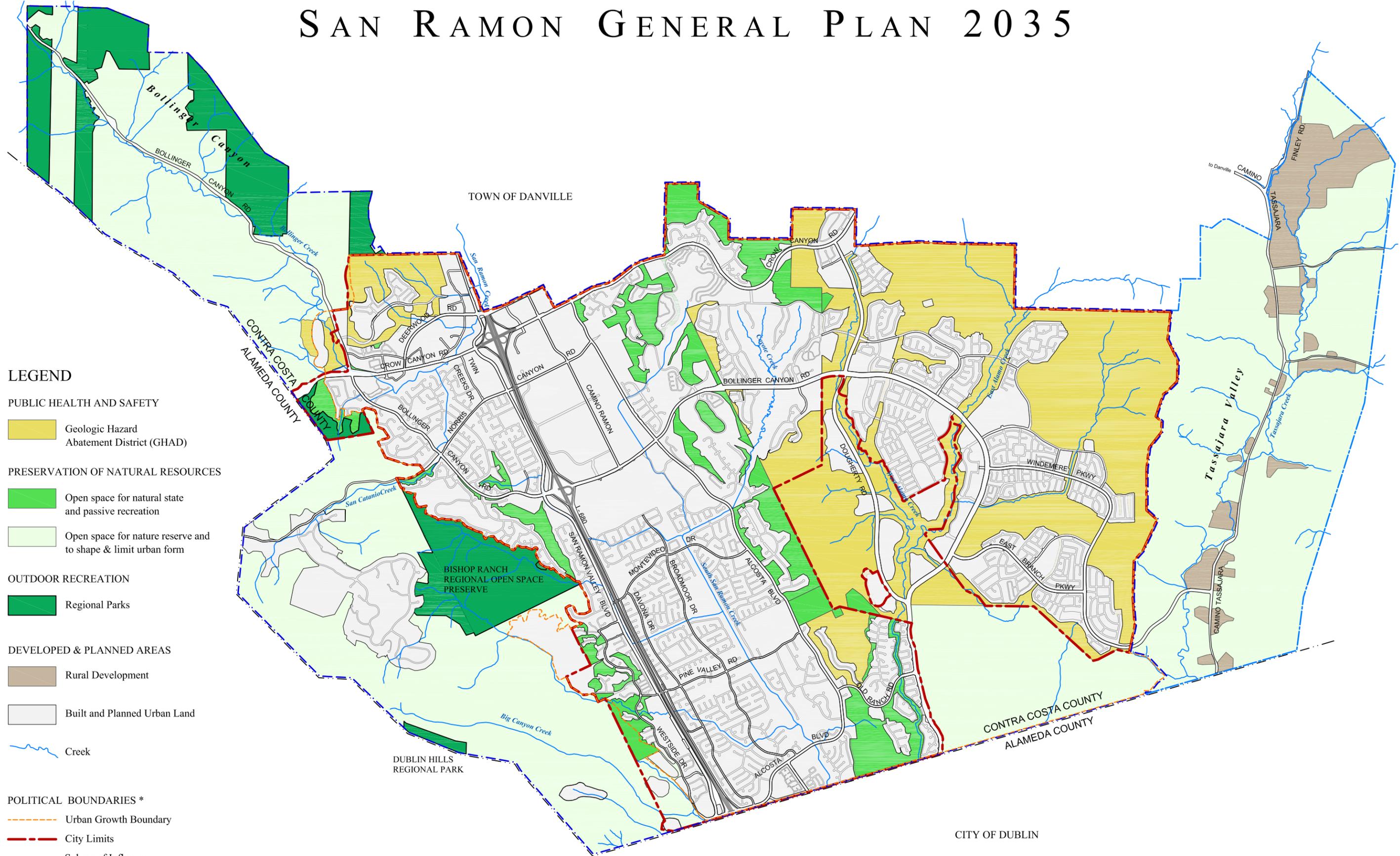
The use of Geologic Hazard Abatement Districts (GHADs) is another tool to secure and protect open space lands. GHADs are independent governmental bodies that provide for activity that is necessary or incidental to the prevention, mitigation, abatement or control of a geologic hazard. These activities may include, but are not limited to, acquisition of property, and construction, repair and maintenance of improvements. The first GHAD that was created in San Ramon was the Canyon Lakes GHAD, which was formed in 1985. Geologic Hazard Abatement District 1990-01 was formed in 1990 to cover the Westbranch area of San Ramon and was subsequently expanded with the annexations of Dougherty Valley, Old Ranch Summit and the Windemere, BLC Property, which includes the Windemere Parkway extension. The Wiedemann Ranch GHAD was formed in 1998 to provide services to the Wiedemann Ranch development in Contra Costa County and it subsequently annexed Subdivision 8118 (Henry Ranch) within the City of San Ramon in 2000. The City Council of San Ramon also serves as the Board of Directors for GHAD 1990-01, and the County Board of Supervisors serves as the Board of Directors for the Canyon Lakes and Wiedemann Ranch GHADs. GHAD 1990-01 is currently the largest GHAD in California and owns substantial amounts of open space, most of which is also overlain by a conservation easement.

GUIDING POLICY

- 8.3-G-1 Acquire, preserve, and maintain open space and its natural resources for future generations.
- 8.3-G-2 Strengthen the City's partnership with East Bay Regional Parks District, Contra Costa County, other jurisdictions and private organizations to expand the ridgeline and hillside open space system in the City's Planning Area.

Open space lands contribute to the quality of life in San Ramon and help establish its character. Ridgeline and hillside trails, including the East Bay Regional Parks District Calaveras Ridge Trail, as well as other ridgeline trails proposed by this General Plan, can provide access to these open space lands.

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LEGEND

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Geologic Hazard Abatement District (GHAD)

PRESERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES

- Open space for natural state and passive recreation
- Open space for nature reserve and to shape & limit urban form

OUTDOOR RECREATION

- Regional Parks

DEVELOPED & PLANNED AREAS

- Rural Development
- Built and Planned Urban Land
- Creek

POLITICAL BOUNDARIES *

- Urban Growth Boundary
- City Limits
- Sphere of Influence
- Planning Area Boundary
- County Boundary

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Figure 8-2
Summary of Open Space Resource

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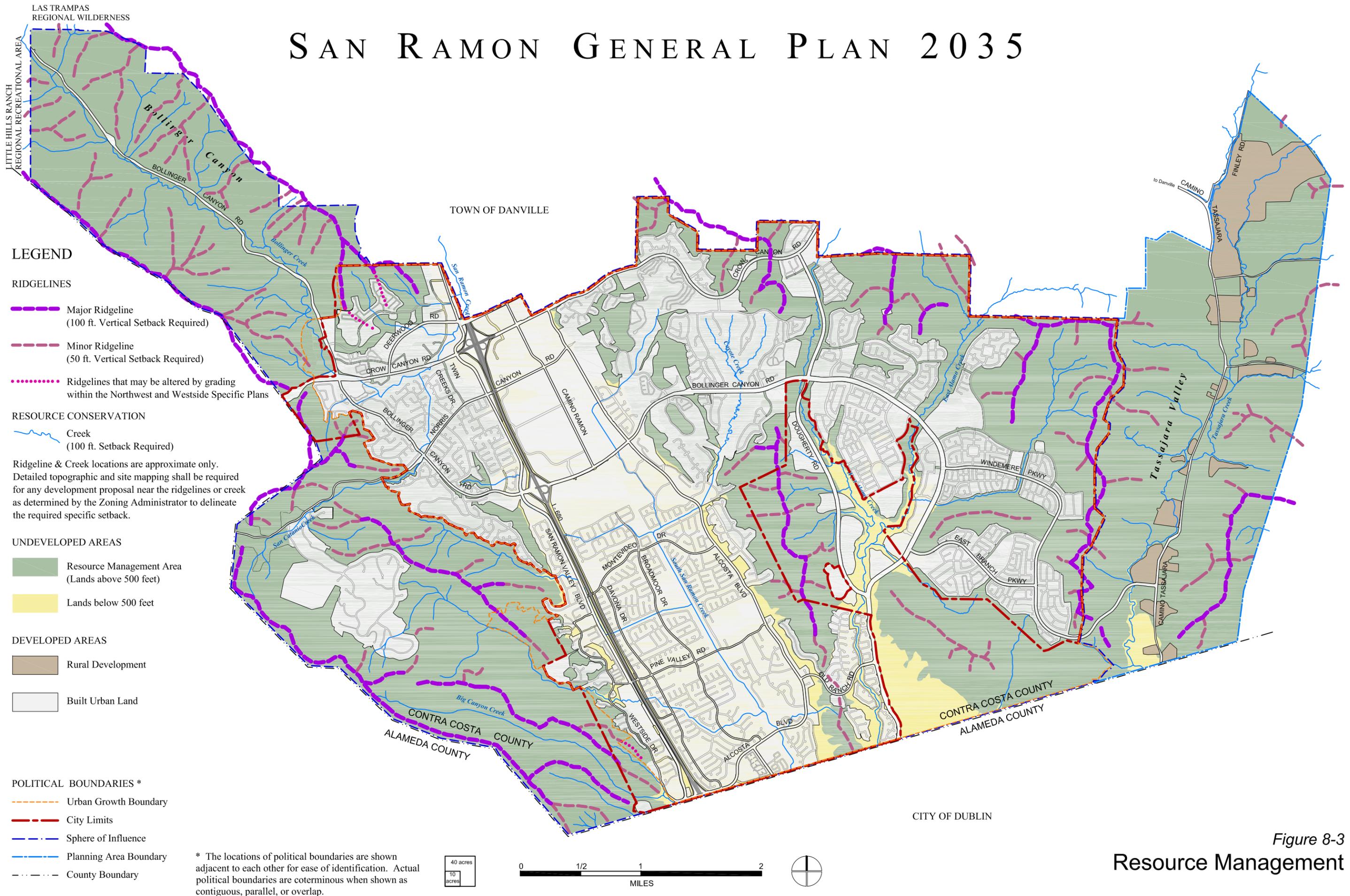


Figure 8-3
Resource Management

* The locations of political boundaries are shown adjacent to each other for ease of identification. Actual political boundaries are coterminous when shown as contiguous, parallel, or overlap.

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IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

8.3-I-1 Preserve, protect, and maintain significant native oak woodlands.

8.3-I-2 Enhance San Ramon's creeks and riparian corridors by requiring preservation or replacement of riparian vegetation, as appropriate and in conformity with regulatory requirements.

Creeks and riparian corridors provide visual amenity, drainage, and wetland and wildlife habitat.

8.3-I-3 Explore opportunities to preserve significant creek, riparian areas, sensitive natural communities, and prominent topographic features as open space.

8.3-I-4 Require maintenance plans for open space areas, including identified natural resources such as ridges and waterways.

As a guide, use standards such as the East Bay Regional Park District's, Wildland Management Policies and Guidelines, for the management and maintenance of open space.

8.3-I-5 Through the development review process, encourage wildlife corridors to provide connectivity between established open space areas, where deemed appropriate.

Successful wildlife corridors, depending on the animal, provide short and direct routes and do not have a physical or psychological barrier. Examples of features commonly used as wildlife corridors include creeks and waterways, natural depressions, and ridgelines.

8.3-I-6 New development shall dedicate open space, as appropriate, through the use of an irrevocable instrument.

Irrevocable instruments may include easements, recorded maps, or deeds of trust.

8.3-I-7 Confer with appropriate agencies and organizations to ensure that all development, including Dougherty Valley, the Westside subareas, and any other future development provides adequate mitigation for any impacts to special status species, wetlands, and significant natural biotic communities.

The environmental reviews for both the Westside and Dougherty Valley Specific Plans identified potential impacts to wildlife, wetlands, and their habitats. Mitigation monitoring and reporting will ensure these resources are protected.

8.3-I-8 Encourage public access to creek corridors, as appropriate.

Public access would be subject to standards and permitting requirements of regulatory agencies.

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- 8.3-I-9 Consider alternatives to culverting or channelization of waterways during all stages of the review process.

Maintaining the natural stream channel is most preferable from a biological and hydrological perspective. However, this policy acknowledges that the use of culverts or channels may be the safest and most cost effective approach in terms of providing adequate drainage and that existing "natural" channels may be substantially degraded.

- 8.3-I-10 Promote maintenance and protection of waterways through the use of Geologic Hazard Abatement District(s), conservation easements, endowments, special assessments, or other appropriate mechanisms.

While these districts have mainly been used in the Dougherty Valley, they may be effective elsewhere in the Planning Area. Future GHADs, or annexation into existing GHADs, conservation easements, endowments, special assessments and other similar methods to be considered for future developments with open space.

- 8.3-I-11 Continue participation in the Contra Costa Clean Water Program to control stormwater pollution and protect the quality of the City's waterways.

- 8.3-I-12 Monitor the condition of waterways within the city limits and take proactive measures to prevent degradation.

Monitoring includes maintaining an up-to-date inventory of creeks and creating a creek maintenance program. Proactive measures may include promoting periodic waterway clean-up efforts, installing fencing or other protective barriers to prevent unauthorized access in sensitive locations, or planting vegetation along waterways to provide shade and prevent erosion.

- 8.3-I-13 Develop viewshed criteria to determine how to manage views of the natural hillsides surrounding San Ramon.

The hills surrounding the City of San Ramon provide a natural hillside backdrop. Viewshed criteria would establish the process to evaluate new development and potential significant public views of the surrounding natural hillsides.

- 8.3-I-14 Maintain the adopt regulations for the protection and preservation of hillsides, creeks, and ridgelines.

The Zoning Ordinance was amended in 2012 to replace the Resource Conservation (-RC) Overlay Zone with regulations that incorporate the protection and preservation of hillsides, creeks, and ridgelines in the Resource Management Division. The amended hillside, creek, and ridgeline regulations of the Resource Management Division apply to 1) all property over 500 feet in elevation, 2) property with a natural gradient in excess of 10 percent, or 3) property within 1,000 feet of a major or minor ridgeline. The amended hillside, creek, and ridgeline regulations of the Resource Management Division do not apply to Built Urban Land as shown in Figure 8-3, except for creek setback regulations.

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- 8.3-I-15 Apply the hillside, creek, and ridgeline regulations of the Resource Management Division of the Zoning Ordinance to the Resource Management Area as shown in Figure 8-3.

The Resource Management Area in Figure 8-3 continues the City's commitment towards hillside, creek, and ridgeline protection and preservation.

- 8.3-I-16 Maintain the slope methodology standards in the Zoning Ordinance to implement the resource management policies.

Slope methodology standards achieve consistent application of the resource management policies through the Zoning Ordinance.

- 8.3-I-17 Retain ridgelines as open space, except for ridgelines that may be altered, as shown in Figure 8-3.

The amended hillside, creek, and ridgeline regulations of the Resource Management Division in the Zoning Ordinance shall provide additional standards for natural terrain alteration.

- 8.3-I-18 Retain hillsides steeper than 20 percent slope as open space, except for slopes and ridgelines that may be altered, as shown in Figure 8-3.

The surrounding natural open space continues to be a vital goal to enhance the community character and quality of life in San Ramon.

8.4 MEASURE G (1999) OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION ACTION PLAN

The following policies respond to Measure G's mandate for "a plan for the acquisition of ridgeline lands, contiguous to the City of San Ramon, to be preserved for open space purposes in perpetuity." They also are consistent with the Government Code's requirement for an Open Space Action Plan that is to include "specific programs which the legislative body intends to pursue in implementing its open space plan" (Section 65564).

GUIDING POLICY

- 8.4-G-1 Expand the ridgeline and hillside open space system in the City's Planning Area by joint efforts with East Bay Regional Parks District, Contra Costa County and nonprofit trustee agencies.

This guiding policy expresses the goal of Measure G (1999) and recognizes that achieving that goal is a cooperative effort.

IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

- 8.4-I-1 Confer with appropriate agencies and organizations in the creation of an institutional framework and financing mechanisms necessary to acquire additional ridgeline areas and agricultural lands, and to preserve, restore, and manage important open space.

Open space lands may be publicly or privately owned.

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- 8.4-I-2 Encourage developers to explore Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) in conjunction with project review to cluster residential development and preserve open space, ridgelines, and creek corridors.

A TDR program can create an incentive for preservation of large areas of open space by allowing the transfer of the development that otherwise would be permitted from a “sending area” to a “receiving area” where the additional development can be accommodated. A TDR program does not require public outlay for the purchase of development rights, but purchase of development rights under a TDR program could be an option for an open space lands trust. Implementing regulations will need to ensure that once the development rights are transferred, the sending areas are preserved as permanent open space.

- 8.4-I-3 Utilize GHADs and/or other secure funding mechanisms for open space to assist in the acquisition and on-going management, operation, and maintenance of a ridgeline and hillside open space system.

- 8.4-I-4 Establish the Open Space Advisory Committee to accomplish the required activities pursuant to Policy 8.4-I-5 below.

The Advisory Committee will advise the City Council on setting priorities for open space acquisition and preservation.

- 8.4-I-5 The Open Space Advisory Committee shall advise and report directly to the City Council annually on activities regarding their charge as described below:

- Prioritize land at risk for development based upon the Priority Property List developed by the Open Space Task Force or refined factors as determined by the Open Space Advisory Committee; and
- Based upon the prioritization of the Priority Property List recommend potential properties for preservation; and
- Advise the City Council regarding opportunities and resources available for establishing a secure funding source for open space acquisition, permanent preservation, and maintenance for properties contiguous to the City limits;
- Provide a forum for input from the community regarding open space issues, which are consistent with the Committee’s charge.
- Seek partnerships with other open space advocacy groups for the purposes of sharing information on funding sources and ways to permanently preserve open space.
- Prepare and submit an annual Work Program for approval by the City Council.

- 8.4-I-6 Use open space in new development to create buffers that delineate the edge of urban areas.

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Other implementing actions will create additional open space in the Planning Area, which will create a backdrop for the City and trail linkages between parks and regional open space.

8.4-I-7 Encourage the restoration of degraded open space areas as part of new development projects, as appropriate.

8.4-I-8 Explore funding opportunities to restore degraded habitat on publicly owned open space and to provide assistance, where appropriate, to owners of privately owned land dedicated as permanent open space, to facilitate private restoration effects.

Assistance may include inter-agency coordination, identification of funding opportunities, the provision of information, or other efforts to aid private property owners in habitat restoration.

8.4-I-9 Preserve open space pursuant to Policy 8.4-I-5, on a priority basis as funds are available using the following criteria:

- Lands currently for sale or that can be acquired under favorable terms or conditions;
- Land with high biological and ecological value, including those that contain natural watersheds, wetlands, riparian corridors, sensitive natural communities, or occupied by special status plant and wildlife species;
- Lands that are contiguous to existing open space properties or other public lands and that provide continuity with current uses and buffers; or
- Lands that provide trail connections or other recreational opportunities.

No order of priority is implied by this list.

8.4-I-10 Continue planning and managing ridgelines, agricultural lands, and open space acquired by the City or other Open Space areas through the Geologic Hazard Abatement District(s) and the Dougherty Valley Open Space Management Plan.

8.4-I-11 Provide incentives for clustering of allowable residential use on infill open space sites to avoid unnecessary grading and site development inconsistent with Plan policies for open space and resource conservation.

An incentive program might be based on the percent of the site to be retained as permanent open space, as described in Table 8-1. Clustering of all buildings should be required, including buildings for park and recreation facilities, as well as buildings allowable for commercial recreation and entertainment uses.

Table 8-1: Open Space/Density Provisions for Infill Open Space Sites

<i>Percent of Site Permanently Preserved as Open Space (gross)</i>	<i>Maximum Density</i>
Up to 69.9 percent	1 unit per 20 net acres
70 percent or more	1 unit per 10 net acres; clustering required.

- 8.4-I-12 Confer, through the development review process, with appropriate agencies and organizations to create a connecting region-wide open space system.
- 8.4-I-13 Allow appropriate and beneficial improvements on open space lands, subject to standards for environmental protection; city hillside, ridgeline, and creek regulations; avoidance of hazards; and building siting and design that will preserve the open space character of the site. An example may include work related to the Geologic Hazard Abatement District.

8.5 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

AGRICULTURAL LAND MAPPING

The California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (Farmland Program) classifies agricultural lands into five categories:

- Prime Farmland: Land with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain the long-term production of agricultural crops. These lands have the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields.
- Farmland of Statewide Importance: Land similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to hold and store moisture.
- Unique Farmland: Land of lesser-quality soils used for the production of the State’s leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards, as found in some climactic zones in California.
- Farmland of Local Importance: Land of importance in the local agricultural economy, as determined by each county’s Board of Supervisors and a local advisory committee.
- Grazing Land: Land with vegetation that is suited to the grazing of livestock.

Prime, Statewide Important, and Unique Farmland are classified as “Important Farmland” by the Farmland Program. Figure 8-4 identifies a total of 162 acres in the San Ramon Planning Area as Prime Farmland and Unique Farmland. The San Ramon Planning Area does not have any Farmland of Statewide Importance. Land use and development activities that propose to convert Important Farmland to non-agricultural use are typically required to evaluate the impacts of such a conversion using the California Department of Conservation’s Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Model. Farmland of Local Importance and Grazing Land do not fall within the Important Farmland umbrella and the proposed conversion of these lands to non-agricultural use does not require LESA Model evaluation.

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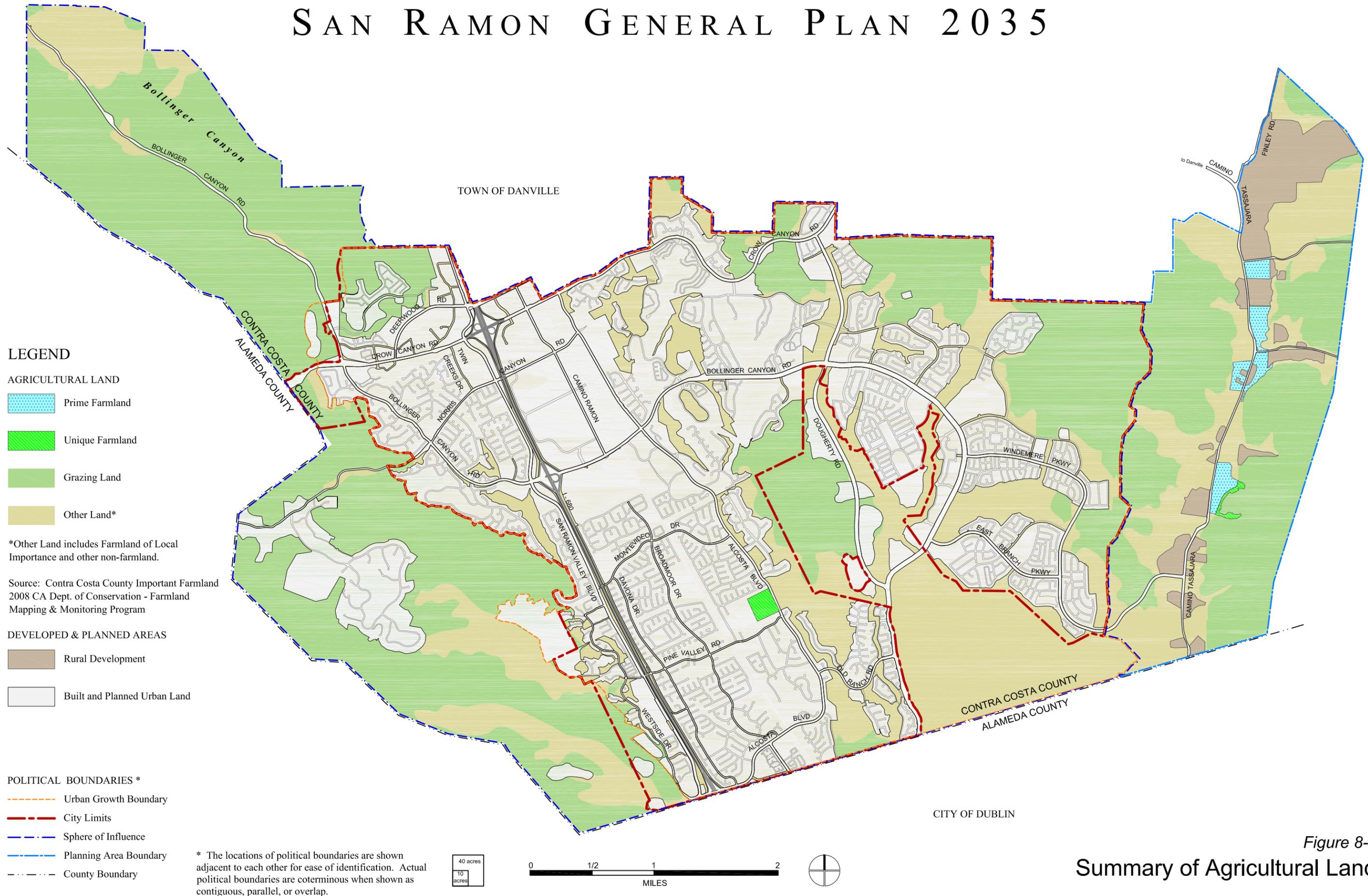


Figure 8-4
Summary of Agricultural Land

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Figure 8-4 also identifies agricultural land within the San Ramon Planning Area, as mapped by the Farmland Program. As shown in the figure, 8,426 acres of land are mapped as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, and Grazing Land. A fourth category, "Other Land" in Figure 8-4, includes Farmland of Local Importance and other non-farmland that does not require evaluation of impacts associated with conversion to non-agricultural uses.

WILLIAMSON ACT

The California Land Conservation Act, also known as the Williamson Act, is a voluntary program that allows agricultural property owners to have their property assessed on the basis of its agricultural production rather than at the current market value. The property owner is thus relieved of having to pay higher property taxes, as long as the land remains in agricultural production. The intent of the Williamson Act is to encourage property owners to continue to farm their land, and to prevent the premature conversion of farmland to urban uses. Participation requires that the area consist of 100 contiguous acres of agricultural land under one or more ownerships.

Upon approval of an application by the County Board of Supervisors in which the property is located in, the agricultural preserve is established, and the land within the preserve is restricted to agricultural and compatible uses for at least 10 years. Williamson Act contracts are automatically renewed annually for an additional one-year period, unless the property owner applies for non-renewal or early cancellation. The Williamson Act contains limited provisions for cancellation of contracts, and a substantial penalty for early cancellation is assessed. Generally, the specific findings to justify cancellation are extremely difficult to make and contracts are rarely cancelled.

Several properties within the Tassajara Valley portion of the Planning Area have active Williamson Act contracts. Between 2005 and 2009, several Williamson Act contracts within the Tassajara Valley were cancelled or not renewed in association with pending development proposals before the County of Contra Costa.

GUIDING POLICY

8.5-G-1 Encourage the continuation of appropriate agricultural activities within the City's Planning Area, while being cognizant that such uses may transition to non-agricultural uses in the future.

IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

8.5-I-1 If Important Farmland is proposed to be converted to non-agricultural use, require evaluation to determine significance of conversion impacts. If the conversion is found to be significant, require mitigation to offset such impacts.

An evaluation shall determine the significance of Important Farmland conversion impacts. If such impacts are determined to be significant, mitigation in the form of onsite or offsite preservation of farmland within Contra Costa County at no less than a 1:1 ratio should be pursued. Alternative forms of mitigation may be considered if the preferred mitigation approach is not feasible.

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- 8.5-1-2 Process development applications involving land encumbered by Williamson Act contracts only if three years or less remain prior to expiration or cancellation of the contract.

It is the preference of the City to have Williamson Act contract issues resolved prior to review of any development applications.

- 8.5-1-3 Minimize land use conflicts between agricultural and urban uses through site planning techniques.

New development near grazing lands or cultivated agricultural uses should incorporate design features to minimize or avoid potential complaints associated with noise, odors, or early morning operations. Examples of design features include buffers and screening measures.

- 8.5-1-4 Explore opportunities with East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), other government agencies, or private organizations to set aside and manage undeveloped lands as open space that are contiguous and sufficient in size to allow continued agricultural uses.

Grazing activities on open space lands can offset the fire prevention and maintenance costs measures.

- 8.5-1-5 Designate land for rural conservation along the west side of Bollinger Canyon Road near the Las Trampas Regional Wilderness in order to preserve visual open space, to provide opportunities for horse-keeping and part-time ranching, and to maintain compatibility with adjoining agricultural uses.

8.6 WATER CONSERVATION AND QUALITY

East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) and Dublin San Ramon Services District (DSRSD) provide potable water service to San Ramon. EBMUD generally serves the northern, western, and central portions of San Ramon, while DSRSD serves the Dougherty Valley.

WATER CONSERVATION

EBMUD has a comprehensive Water Conservation Program in place that includes both supply- and demand-side measures, including audits, incentives, optimal management practices, wastewater and landscape regulations, education programs, support activities, metering, and leak detection and pipe replacement. EBMUD also recommends that local cities require water conservation measures as a standard feature in the design and construction of proposed development projects.

In 2006, state legislation (AB 1881, Laird, 2006) required the Department of Water Resources to adopt an updated Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELo). In 2009, the State Department of Water Resources adopted an updated model ordinance that became effective January 1, 2010. As a result, the City of San Ramon requires new

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development to meet the State Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance in an effort to conserve landscape water use.

Water reclamation can also significantly reduce water demand and storage requirements. Reclaimed water is used most effectively for irrigating areas such as parks, greenbelts, golf courses, roadway medians, and front yards. DSRSD has provided an increasing amount of recycled water throughout their service area within San Ramon. Additionally, groundwater has the potential to reduce demand on municipal supplies, although the characteristics of the aquifer and its water table in the San Ramon Planning Area are variable.

WATER QUALITY

The primary goal of the City of San Ramon Stormwater Program is to reduce pollution of storm water as it enters the local creeks and the San Francisco Bay. The City of San Ramon is a member of the Contra Costa Clean Water Program, which has been instrumental in developing Low Impact Development (LID) techniques for the reduction and treatment of storm water runoff from development projects. The San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board adopts regulations to satisfy National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements to manage storm water runoff.

The City also monitors construction sites to ensure adequate Best Management Practices (BMPs) are implemented to reduce water pollution during construction in compliance with the State General Construction Permit issued by the California State Water Resources Control Board.

GUIDING POLICY

8.6-G-1 Promote the implementation of water quality and conservation programs and measures by San Ramon employers, residents, and public agencies.

IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

8.6-I-1 Require new development projects to implement indoor water conservation and demand management measures.

Examples of conservation and demand management measures include low-flow bathroom fixtures, high water efficiency clothes washers and dishwashers.

8.6-I-2 Require new development projects to implement outdoor water conservation and demand management measures.

Examples of conservation and demand management measures include separate metering of domestic and irrigation water, drought-resistant vegetation, drip irrigation or low-precipitation-rate sprinklers, programmable irrigation controllers with automatic rain shutoff sensors, and hydrozones that keep plants with similar water needs in the same irrigation zone. Furthermore, new development projects are encouraged to install drought resistant vegetation instead of turf.

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- 8.6-I-3 New development in areas where recycled water service exists or is planned shall be plumbed with “purple pipe” and other measures necessary to accommodate non-potable water service.

Exceptions are allowed for projects that would not use potable water for non-potable use or would only use small amounts of potable water for non-potable use.

- 8.6-I-4 Require new development to meet the State Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELo).

Effective January 1, 2010 all development must meet the State MWELo requirements which establish landscape design requirements for new and rehabilitated landscape areas within the City.

- 8.6-I-5 Collaborate with DERWA (Dublin San Ramon Services District and East Bay Municipal Utilities District Recycled Water Authorities) to expand the recycled water distribution system in an efficient and timely manner.

Installing recycled water infrastructure as part of roadway construction projects is an effective way to expand the distribution system, while also minimizing disruption to residents and businesses.

- 8.6-I-6 Continue implementation of the City of San Ramon Stormwater Management Program to reduce storm water pollution, provide public education, and to protect the water quality of the City’s local creeks and streams.

In order to comply with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems, the City of San Ramon Stormwater Program performs a variety of activities which may include participating in the Contra Costa Clean Water Program, field inspections, educational and outreach activities, storm drain cleaning, street sweeping, the implementation of new development/redevelopment stormwater controls, or other activities.

- 8.6-I-7 Promote the protection of groundwater resources by collaborating with agencies that monitor and oversee clean-up efforts at existing sources of pollution.

There are several sites in San Ramon that previously contained leaking underground storage tanks. These sites are currently undergoing monitoring and remediation and are regulated by agencies including the County of Contra Costa and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board. The intent of this policy is to ensure that the City is aware of groundwater pollution sources and proactively engaged with appropriate agencies to facilitate efficient and timely clean-up efforts.

8.7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL, PALEONTOLOGICAL, AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

LOCAL HISTORY

At the time of European contact in the 18th century, the San Ramon area was occupied by the Ohlone tribe of California Native Americans. The tribal group that most likely occupied the San Ramon area is the Chochenyo language group, whose territory extended from the southern end of the Carquinez Strait south to Mission San Jose (present-day Fremont), east to present-day Livermore and west to the San Francisco Bay. The estimated Ohlone population in 1770—when the first mission was established in Ohlone territory—was approximately 10,000. By 1832, the population had declined to fewer than 2,000, mainly due to diseases introduced by the European explorers and settlers. The Gold Rush brought further disease to the native inhabitants, and by the 1850s, nearly all of the Ohlone had adapted in some way or another to economies based on cash income. Hunting and gathering activities continued to decline and were rapidly replaced with economies based on ranching and farming.

Following Mexico's independence from Spain in 1822, the vast mission lands were granted to private citizens as ranchos. The San Ramon Valley contained three large ranchos: San Ramon (Amador), 16,517 acres; San Ramon (Carpentier), 8,917 acres; and San Ramon (Norris), 4,451 acres.

The population of the Contra Costa County increased rapidly during the Gold Rush and, in the post-Civil War Era. The great rancheros of the Spanish period were divided and sold for agricultural uses, with intensively irrigated farming made possible in some areas of Contra Costa County by the development of canals that brought water from the eastern portions of the County to the central portions. Walnuts were an especially attractive orchard crop in central portions of the County, with farmers using thin-shelled English walnut branches grafted to hardy and disease-resistant American walnut rootstock.

The first settlers to the San Ramon area were Leo and Mary Norris, who purchased 4,450 acres of land in 1850, and who are the namesakes of Norris Canyon. Other early settlers included names that are recognizable from local street names and landmarks, including Crow, Bollinger, and Glass. The first village developed near the site of the present-day Outpost Sports Bar at the intersection of Deerwood Road and San Ramon Valley Boulevard. San Ramon was known by a series of names in the nineteenth century: Brevenville, for a local blacksmith; Lynchville, for the early settler William Lynch; and Limerick, for the numerous Irish immigrants.

The Southern Pacific Railroad arrived in the San Ramon Valley in the 1890s. Dubbed the San Ramon Branch Line, the railroad line originally extended from a junction with the Oakland-Stockton main line near Martinez south to San Ramon, a distance of approximately 20 miles. Service commenced in June 1891. In 1909, the southern terminus of the San Ramon Branch Line was extended south to a junction with the Lathrop-Niles Junction main line near Pleasanton. San Ramon was served with a station, known as San Ramon Siding, near the present-day Iron Horse Trail crossing at Crow Canyon Road. By the mid-1970s, traffic on the line had dwindled to 125 carloads annually and the Southern Pacific petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission to abandon the branch line. The line was formally abandoned in 1978 and the counties of Alameda and Contra Costa acquired ownership of the

right-of-way within their respective jurisdictions. The present-day Iron Horse Trail follows the alignment of the San Ramon Branch Line from Pleasanton to Concord.

The San Ramon Valley remained primarily an agricultural area up through the early 1960s. Following the completion of Interstate 680 (I-680) through the San Ramon Valley in the mid-1960s, the San Ramon area experienced rapid growth. The first residential subdivisions were developed in South San Ramon (a.k.a. San Ramon Village) and Twin Creeks. In the early 1980s, Sunset Development began developing the Bishop Ranch Business Park. The most notable facilities in the Bishop Ranch Business Park are Chevron Park and the AT&T campus (formerly known as the Pacific Bell campus), both of which opened in the mid-1980s. Sunset Development continued to develop the Bishop Ranch Business Park through the 1980s and 1990s.

With growth came the desire for greater control over land use and development. In March 1983, the City electorate voted to incorporate and the City of San Ramon came into existence on July 1, 1983. Since incorporation, the City has expanded its limits west to include the Westside Drive area and portions of Norris Canyon, north to include the Crow Canyon area, and east to include the Dougherty Hills and Dougherty Valley.

HISTORIC AND PREHISTORIC RESOURCES

The San Ramon Planning Area includes several sites of both historic and prehistoric value.

Forest Home Farms Historical Park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Landmark Plaque No. 2174). The 16-acre historical park is located 19953 San Ramon Valley Boulevard and features the Boone House and interpretative exhibits depicting historic agricultural activities of the San Ramon Valley.

Prehistoric sites consist of Native American habitations and rock art. Native American archeological sites in this portion of Contra Costa County tend to be situated along ridgetops, midslope terraces, alluvial flats, at the base of hills, between saddles, near ecotones, and near sources of water including springs. The Planning Area encompasses all of these environmental features with recorded Native American archeological sites found in each of these areas.

Several state laws, most notably CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(f) and Public Resources Code §5020-5029 and 21083.2, protect archeological and historical resources. To protect historic resources, the State has formed the State Historical Resources Committee that conducts the State Historic Resource Inventory and maintains the California Register of Historic Resources, which identifies historic landmarks and points of interest. The Committee also provides recommendations for the National Register of Historic Resources.

GUIDING POLICY

8.7-G-1 Identify, evaluate, and preserve the archaeological, paleontological, and historic resources that are found within the San Ramon Planning Area.

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IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

- 8.7-1-1 Require that new development evaluate potential impacts to historic, archaeological, and paleontological resources and, if necessary, implement appropriate mitigation measures to protect the resources.

Projects that disturb undeveloped land or propose the demolition or substantial modification of structures 45 years of age or older will be required to evaluate potential cultural resource impacts. Exceptions to this policy include infill development or redevelopment on sites that have been developed within the previous 45 years.

- 8.7-1-2 Protect and maintain the integrity of officially listed historic resources.

- 8.7-1-3 Closely review any proposals to nominate local resources for eligibility for listing on national or state historic registers.

Discretion should be used in reviewing such nominations to ensure that resources have significant historic value and have been appropriately evaluated.

- 8.7-1-4 As a standard condition of approval, require all development projects involving grading and excavation to implement appropriate measures in the event that burial sites or human remains are encountered during earthwork activities.

Appropriate measures may include stopping work within 100 feet of the find, notifying the Contra Costa County Coroner's Office, and, if the Coroner determines that the remains are determined to be of Native American origin, notification of the Native American Heritage Commission.

- 8.7-1-5 For projects involving a General Plan Amendment, the development of a Specific Plan (or amendment), or designating open space, provide for tribal consultation opportunities in accordance with state law.

State law establishes specific requirements for tribal consultation in these circumstances. It broadens the focus from the protection and preservation of archaeological sites and artifacts to include protection of traditional tribal cultural places on public and private lands, for both federally and non-federally recognized tribes.

