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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Conservation and Open Space Element defines and establishes open space and conservation goals and policies in an effort to preserve and effectively manage the valuable resources within Rancho Mirage. The Element covers issues relating to the City's parks and recreation, biological, energy and mineral, water, and archaeological and historic resources. These resources contribute to the quality of life for City residents and attract a significant tourist trade. Goals, policies, and programs contained in this Element will serve as the tools to insure the preservation and management of these resources, thereby assuring their long term viability and integration with regional open space resources.



**CONSERVATION AND  
OPEN SPACE ELEMENT**

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## **PARKS AND RECREATION RESOURCES**

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### **PURPOSE**

The Parks and Recreation section establishes the existing and future system of public parks, trails, and bikeways in Rancho Mirage. The goals, policies, and programs for parks and recreation are an expression of the community's needs and desires for active and passive recreation opportunities. Recreation is a major feature of the Rancho Mirage culture as evidenced by the abundance of golf courses, tennis courts, and swimming pools found in the City. Many of the City's residents and visitors choose to spend their leisure time outdoors in some form of recreation or exercise activity. Private facilities, however, only partially fulfill the recreational needs of Rancho Mirage residents. Additional public park facilities, multi-use trails, and trailheads that accommodate pedestrian, biking, and equestrian uses are needed to complete the recreation system in Rancho Mirage.

The Parks and Recreation section of this Element has a direct relationship with the Land Use Plan in the Land Use Element. Existing and future park sites are shown on the land use map and have a bearing on the suitability of adjacent land use designations. This section also has connections to the other sections on this Element, including the preservation and conservation of natural resources with regard to trail usage in open space corridors and mountain environments.

### **BACKGROUND**

In 1989, the City prepared a Parks Master Plan, which included an assessment of local park needs. A supply and demand analysis formed the basis for proposed additional park facilities to serve residents of Rancho Mirage. An important ingredient in the park needs analysis that supported the Master Plan was the inclusion of park facilities in Palm Desert, Cathedral City, and Indian Wells in recognition of the cross utilization of park and recreation facilities between cities.

Guided by the Parks Master Plan, Rancho Mirage has expanded its parks and trail system throughout the City to adapt to the growing population. Currently, there are five parks that include a mix of mini and local parks. Three trails have been developed to connect the parks with other open spaces in the City. These parks and trails are described below and displayed on Exhibits V-1, V-2, and V-3.

### **Park and Trail Categories**

#### **Mini-Parks**

Mini-parks are generally less than one acre in size and are intended to complement adjacent uses. Mini parks can often substitute for private open space in employment centers or high density residential areas. Mini-parks may take the form of children's play



The Michael S. Wolfson Park offers a space for quiet enjoyment, landscaped walking paths, and a "Braille Trail."



Cancer Survivors Park is one of the City's mini-parks and provides a source of strength and a place of comfort, where people can go to reflect, meditate and connect with other local survivors.



lots, passive seating areas, city entry features or special purpose open space areas.

Wolfson Park and Cancer Survivors Park represent City owned mini-parks. Mini-parks add to the community's design and local quality of life and should be encouraged as opportunities arise.

**Michaels S. Wolfson Park** is located at Da Vall and Frank Sinatra Drive. This 1-acre park has a Victorian theme that features a fountain, decorative lighting fixtures, and benches, with a Braille-marked trail and fragrance garden. A “Welcome” greeting from Dinah Shore and Frank Sinatra may be heard at the park’s entrance. Michael S. Wolfson Park is considered a place for quiet enjoyment.

The Richard and Annette Bloch **Cancer Survivors Park** sits adjacent to City Hall along Highway 111. Featuring a pyramid kiosk, tiled benches, inspirational plaques, sculptures, ponds and a hillside waterfall, this park is designed to give hope to those with cancer. Cancer Survivors Park is one of 22 such parks across the country. This park was constructed by the Bloch Foundation as a gift to the community.

### **Local Parks**

Local parks are intended to provide for the active and passive recreation needs of nearby residents in the vicinity of the park. Local park facilities typically include such features as picnic areas, playground equipment, hard court areas, multi-purpose playfields, and limited parking. Special landscaping and public art may also be featured in local parks. The design of local parks must carefully consider their physical proximity and relationship to adjacent homes to avoid any adverse impacts from noise, traffic, or lights.

The usual size of local parks is five to ten acres although the ultimate size will depend on available land and its relationship to neighborhood residences. While local parks should usually be located within walking distance, the low residential densities, population characteristics, and number of gated communities in Rancho Mirage justify a theoretical service radius of approximately 1.5 miles. The actual service area for a local park is often a function of the ease with which residents can access the park.

Local parks typically serve a population of approximately 5,000 residents. Based upon the average age of the City's population, the future development of community parks, and the fact that many residents live in gated communities containing private recreation amenities, a Rancho Mirage buildout population of approximately 32,400 residents would ultimately be well served by four local parks.

For Rancho Mirage residents who do not live in gated communities, local parks are an important asset. Local parks should be located on local public streets to facilitate safe and convenient access. One of the concerns often raised, however, is the fear that parks will attract outside influences and crime to the neighborhood. The design of local parks must consider safety and security issues to assure that they become and remain assets to the neighborhood.

**Blixseth Mountain Park** is located east of the Magnesia Storm Channel and Rancho Mirage Elementary School, off Mirage Road. This 7-acre park was completed in 2000 and features native desert landscaping, walking paths, and benches for observing desert and mountain vistas. Considered a place to experience the natural beauty of the desert, the park offers visitors an opportunity for quiet solitude.

**Magnesia Falls Park** is located north of the Rancho Mirage Elementary School. In 1996, the City and Palm Springs Unified School District entered into a cooperative agreement for the joint use of part of the school campus. Completed in fall of 1999, this 1.3-acre park gives the neighborhood access to playground equipment, shaded areas, picnic tables, and an informal ball field.

**Whitewater Park** is located on San Jacinto Drive along the Whitewater River Channel. Originally developed in 1982, this park was expanded in 1994 to 8.25 acres to accommodate additional active recreational use. The Park features tennis, basketball, racquetball/handball courts, an informal playfield, and picnic facilities. Other features include a children's playground, life-size fire engine, water feature, recycling drop-off, and walking paths with a fitness trail. Many individuals and groups hold private parties (e.g., birthdays, reunions, and picnics) at the Park. The Parks and Recreation Commission hosts an annual Rancho Mirage Art Affaire at the Park. Held each November, the Art Affaire provides residents with a free community event that features 100 juried artists and afternoon jazz performances. Casa Chiquita, the oldest house in the City, has been relocated adjacent to Whitewater Park.

One additional local park site is proposed. A 6.6-acre park, located in the City's Sphere of Influence, would be built to the east of the future Interstate 10 (I-10)/Bob Hope interchange. This park would serve as a vivid landscape feature for visitors entering or exiting Rancho Mirage along Bob Hope Drive, and provide parkland amenities for future development north of Dinah Shore Drive.

### **Community Parks**

Community parks provide active and passive recreation opportunities on a larger scale than local parks. The desirable size for community parks ranges from 20 to 40 acres. Given the low population density of Rancho Mirage and adjacent cities, the appropriate service radius for a community park is about five miles. Community parks typically include fields for organized baseball, softball, soccer, and football. Tennis complexes and a large swimming pool are often included in community parks. A community recreation building may also be provided for indoor sports as well as educational and cultural activities. Passive recreational activities may include picnic areas, formal gardens, and open space areas. Rancho Mirage residents are currently served by community parks located outside of the City and funded through a multi-city agreement (see Multi-City Recreation Facilities discussion below).

The City has designated approximately 20 to 25 acres for a community park near the intersection of Via Vail and Key Largo, as shown on Exhibit V-1, Park Master Plan. This proposed community park would be located on City-owned land and may include a 44,000



Blixseth Mountain Park provides exposure to the natural desert experience, nature trails, native desert landscaping.



Whitewater Park supports a multitude of active recreational activities and cultural events.



square foot YMCA recreation and fitness complex. The community park may also become a venue for outdoor concerts and other cultural events. Additionally, to accommodate the expected area growth, the City's Land Use Plan designates approximately 50 acres of land for a potential community park in its Sphere of Influence, near I-10 and Da Vall Drive. Since both parks, if built, would serve residents and visitors outside of Rancho Mirage, the City would then explore cost sharing opportunities for these parks with surrounding cities and the Tribe.

### **Multi-City Recreation Facilities**

A multi-city approach to funding park and recreation facilities that serve the Cove Communities (Cities of Palm Desert, Indian Wells and Rancho Mirage) was initiated in 1990 through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between these three cities. The tri-city MOU distributes the cost of recreation facilities based upon a formula of population and assessed value. The City of Rancho Mirage has contributed its share toward the construction of the sports complex located in the Palm Desert Civic Center Park. Lighted softball fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, and sand volleyball courts are available to Rancho Mirage, Palm Desert, and Indian Wells residents through the joint funding agreement. The YMCA located in the Palm Desert Civic Center Park, is also a product of the MOU, as is the Cook Street Sports Complex adjacent to the Palm Desert High School. The Cove Communities also share the cost of the Children's Discovery Museum of the Desert as part of the MOU agreement.

### **Bikeways**

Bicycle facilities are categorized in classifications of I, II, or III. The Class I bikeway is a bicycle path completely separated from any street or highway. Except for the bike path along the Whitewater Channel, Class I bikeways in Rancho Mirage take the form of a combined meandering sidewalk and bike path in the landscaped parkways along arterial streets. The system of bikeways and sidewalks will be expanded along arterials as roadway widening and development projects occur.

Class II bikeways are signed and striped bicycle lanes within the paved section of the street. Bicycle lanes are for one way travel by cyclists, generally for longer recreational or commuter purposes. Most of the City's arterial streets are sufficiently wide to allow for a 4-foot Class II bike lane along the curb.

Class III bikeways are designated but unmarked bike routes on the street within vehicular travel lanes. Due to the inherent potential conflict with vehicular traffic, Class III bike routes are not recommended for Rancho Mirage except where Class I and II facilities are not feasible and where an essential regional bicycle route connection is desired, or where Class I and II facilities are not warranted due to lesser roadway classifications. The existing and planned bike paths and sidewalks are shown in Exhibit V-2, Bike, Golf Cart, and Pedestrian Paths.

### **Golf Cart Travel**

Recreation is a major feature of the Rancho Mirage culture as evidenced by the numerous golf courses available throughout the City's neighborhoods. However, residents' use of golf carts extends beyond transportation on individual courses. Golf carts are also used for access between residences and golf courses in adjacent neighborhoods, as well as to local commercial and medical facilities, City Hall, and golf cart paths in adjoining cities.

Golf Cart facilities are categorized in classifications of I, II, or III. The Class I golf cart facility is a path completely separated from the roadway used by automobile traffic for shared one-way or two-way use by golf carts, bicycles, and pedestrians. Class I golf cart paths are incorporated into Class I bikeways. Class II facilities provide a striped lane for one-way golf cart and bicycle travel on a street or highway. Class III facilities provide for shared use with automobile and bicycle traffic. Class III facilities are established by placing Golf Cart Route signs along roadways with speed limits of 25 mph or less in order to link them to Class I or Class II facilities.

Additional detail on the existing and future system of golf cart facilities can be found in the City's Golf Cart Transportation Plan. The City's golf cart circulation system is shown in Exhibit V-2, Bike, Golf Cart, and Pedestrian Paths.

### **Hiking Trails**

In addition to the recreational use of sidewalks and bike paths by pedestrians, existing and planned hiking facilities in Rancho Mirage utilize non paved trails in wash areas and the mountains. The City's hiking trails are primarily located along the foothills providing access to trails in the Magnesia Falls area. Some of these trails follow paths, dirt roads, or utility access routes (although some are not dedicated for public use). The beauty of the mountainous backdrop invites residents and visitors to experience the scenery on foot. The public's use of mountain trails must be balanced with the need to protect wildlife habitat, especially that of the lambing areas of bighorn sheep in the Santa Rosa Mountains. A system of restricted and unrestricted trails is recommended in the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan to provide recreational opportunities in the Rancho Mirage area while protecting bighorn sheep habitat.

Existing and planned trails are shown on Exhibit V-3, Hiking and Equestrian Trails. Future trails are proposed to provide access from Rancho Mirage trails to the Art Smith Trail in the mountains and other paths that make up the extensive trails system in the Santa Rosa Mountains. Existing trails can be made more accessible by the provision of modest trailheads with limited parking. Prominent examples of existing trails are described below.

The Butler-Abrams Trail is an asphalt trail that begins at Michael Wolfson Park and parallels the Whitewater Wash dipping down into and out of the wash and becomes divided on the south side into separate asphalt and dirt (for equestrians) trails. The trail ends at Country Club Drive, one block north of Highway 111. Fabulous views of the mountains and golf courses are abundant on this quiet travel route. The Clancy Lane Trail begins on Clancy Lane between Rancho Mañana and the Monterey Gate as a developed trail and continues under Bob Hope Drive down into and crossing the Whitewater Wash to Whitewater Park, following the edge of the wash. The Bighorn Overlook Trail begins behind City Hall. It is less than ¼ mile in length and is moderately steep with several switchbacks. There is also a picnic shelter and an incredible panoramic view.

### **Equestrian Trails**

The City's equestrian trail planning must balance the desire of a few dedicated riders with the fact that, due to the urbanization in the Coachella Valley, safe and pleasant opportunities for horse riding are limited. The proposed horse trails are confined to those neighborhoods where the keeping of horses is permitted and where opportunities exist to connect equestrian areas with the Whitewater Channel and mountain trails. The Butler-Abrams Trail, whose trailhead is located in Michael S. Wolfson Park, and Clancy Lane Trail, are among the best equestrian options. Equestrian access to trails can be improved by





providing equestrian oriented trailhead facilities where appropriate and warranted. Equestrian trails are depicted on Exhibit V-3, Hiking and Equestrian Trails.

### **Parks and Trails Planning**

As the City continues to evolve, a parks and trails analysis should be integrated into new development project approval. The parks and trails planning process includes a local needs analysis, taking into account the particular demographic characteristics of Rancho Mirage residents and visitors, as well as the initial and ongoing cost associated with operation and maintenance. The needs analysis is adjusted for any unique opportunities and constraints that exist or may occur in the future.

### **Parks and Trails Funding**

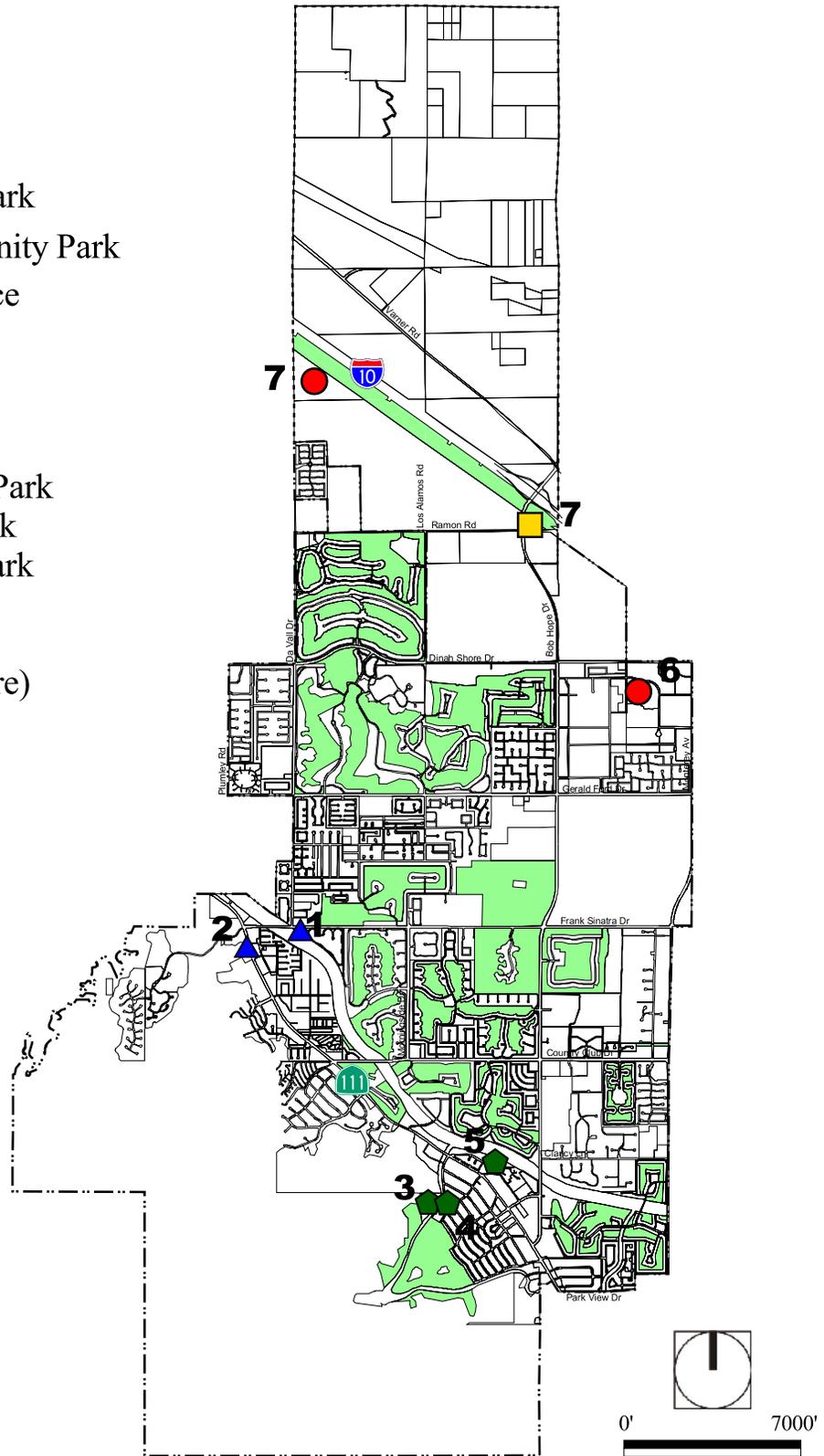
The extent to which the City of Rancho Mirage can plan and implement parks and trails facilities is related to the availability of funding. The Quimby Act was established as State law in 1965 to provide a funding source for parkland acquisition. Residential subdivisions must dedicate parkland or pay an in lieu fee to enable the City to acquire parkland on a ratio of 3 acres per 1,000 residents. Based on the City's anticipated growth and population characteristics, it is expected that a total of 97 acres would be needed to satisfy projected buildout park needs. Buildout of lands within with the Sphere of Influence south of I-10, if annexed, would bring the total to 133 acres. The General Plan Land Use Element provides (excluding mini-parks) 48 acres of parkland within the City, and allows for expansion of up to 128 acres, including planned park facilities within the SOI. The Quimby Act does not provide dedication or fees for the City's trail system.

The construction of parks and bicycle paths in Rancho Mirage is primarily funded by part of the City's development impact fee. The fee has been established to mitigate impacts from new developments that create a need for public facilities such as parks. On occasion the City has received State grant funds for the construction of bicycle paths. Construction of parks and bicycle facilities in redevelopment project areas are potentially eligible expenditures of redevelopment funds. Currently, the primary source of parks and trails maintenance funding is the City wide annual assessment, although the City is eligible, and has received State grants that can be used for acquisition of park property and park construction projects. The City may also explore additional opportunities to fund park and recreation facilities to satisfy projected demand through the tri-city MOU.

**PARKS MASTER PLAN**

-  Mini Park
-  Local Park
-  Proposed Local Park
-  Proposed Community Park
-  Private Open Space
-  City Limits
-  Sphere of Influence

1. Michael S. Wolfson Park
2. Cancer Survivors Park
3. Blixseth Mountain Park
4. Magnesia Falls Park
5. Whitewater Park
6. Monterey Park (Future)
7. Proposed



**CONSERVATION AND  
OPEN SPACE ELEMENT**

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**BIKE/GOLF CART/PEDESTRIAN PATHS**

Bike/Golf Cart/Pedestrian Paths

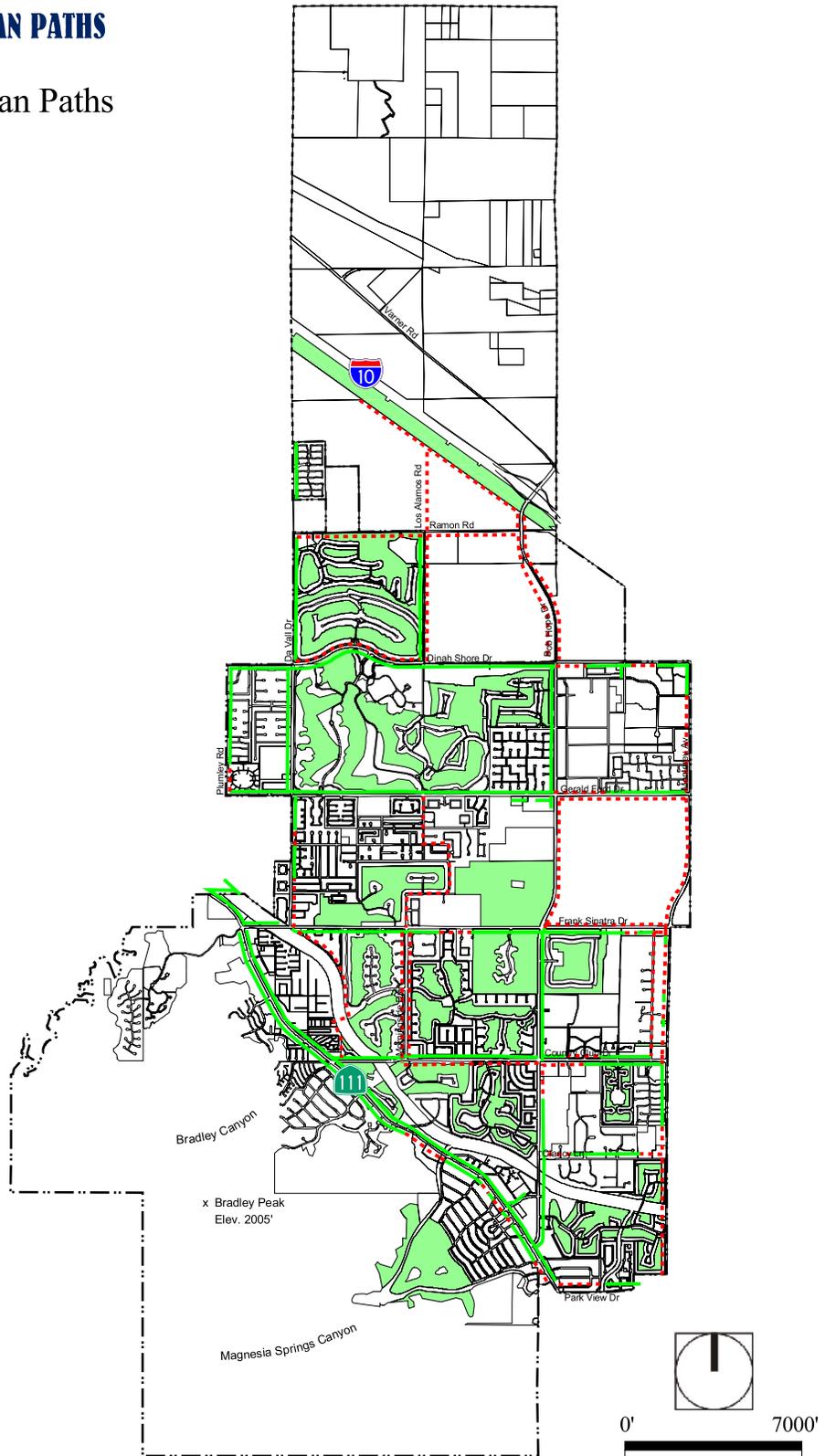
 Existing

 Future

 Parks

 City Limits

 Sphere of Influence



**CONSERVATION AND  
OPEN SPACE ELEMENT**

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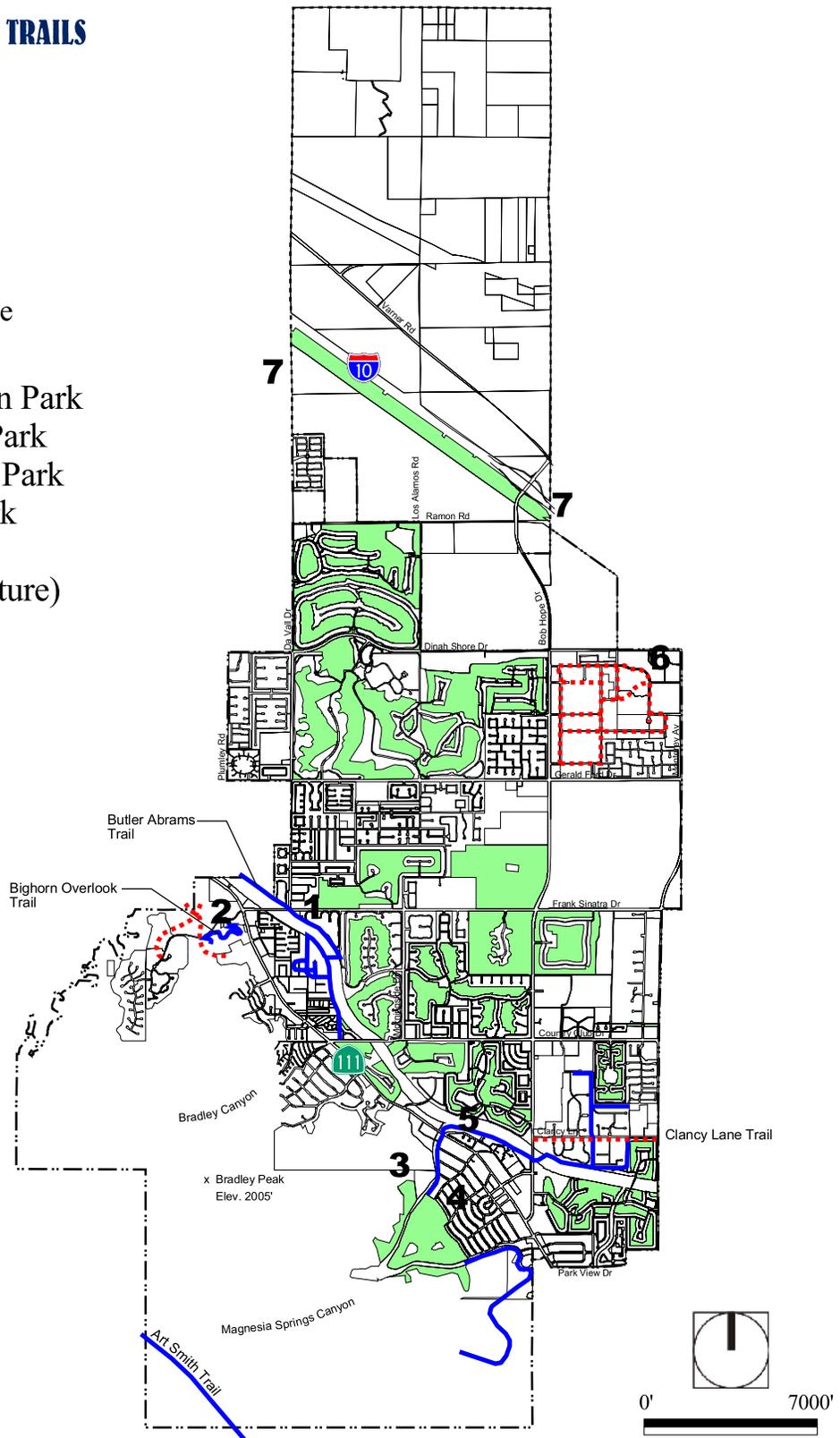
**HIKING AND EQUESTRIAN TRAILS**

Horse/Hiking Trails

-  Existing
-  Future

-  City Limits
-  Sphere of Influence

1. Michael S. Wolfson Park
2. Cancer Survivors Park
3. Blixseth Mountain Park
4. Magnesia Falls Park
5. Whitewater Park
6. Monterey Park (Future)
7. Proposed



**CONSERVATION AND  
OPEN SPACE ELEMENT**

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## **GOALS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS**

The City's parks and trails plans should be reviewed regularly to ensure that the needs of the City's residents are being met. The demand for traditional park space in Rancho Mirage is affected by the recreational preferences of today's residents. Part time residents in gated communities, where golf and tennis are the primary recreational activities, generate a lesser need for public parks. It is anticipated, however, that with new growth, the City may experience a shift towards a larger number of permanent households in developments without on-site recreation facilities. The City's recreational facilities planning should keep in step with these projected population trends.

### **GOAL 1**

A balanced system of parks, trails, and recreation facilities that meets active and passive recreation needs of all residents and visitors.

### **GOAL 2**

Trails for recreational use in the Santa Rosa Mountains that allow City residents and visitors to experience the desert environment and that preserve the mountains and associated sensitive plants and animals in their natural state.

#### **Policy 1**

The City's park system shall consist of mini-parks, local parks, and community parks.

#### **Policy 2**

To the extent feasible, the City shall provide at least 3 acres of local and community parkland per 1,000 in population, which include park facilities for all age segments of the population.

##### ***Program 2.A***

Seek additional revenue sources for the development and maintenance of additional parks to meet the needs of existing and future residents.

##### ***Program 2.B***

Require all new development to provide parkland in accordance with Quimby Act requirements.

##### ***Program 2.C***

Revise and update the in-lieu park fees to reflect current land prices and standards.

##### ***Program 2.D***

Monitor and update the Parks Master Plan periodically to reflect changes in supply and demand for parks and recreation facilities.

##### ***Program 2.E***

Continue to participate in the Cove Communities Memorandum of Understanding and explore funding opportunities for multi-use park and recreational facilities with the County of Riverside, adjacent cities, and the Tribe.



### **Policy 3**

To the extent feasible, the design of City parks and trails shall accommodate the special needs of the disabled and senior population in Rancho Mirage.

### **Policy 4**

The design of local parks shall consider neighborhood suggestions for facility needs.

#### ***Program 4.A***

Plan for and facilitate the development of citywide and regional bikeway and golf cart systems to provide visitors and residents with non vehicular alternatives for travel to work, convenience shopping, and recreation.

#### ***Program 4.B***

Inventory existing major arterial streets for potential opportunities for Class I bikeways on both sides of the street.

#### ***Program 4.C***

Designate Class II bikeways on all existing arterial streets, which have sufficient width to safely accommodate bicycle travel lanes. Include Class II bikeways on all new and improved arterial streets in the City. Place Class II bike lane markings and appropriate signage on arterials of sufficient width.

### **Policy 5**

Class III bikeways shall only be permitted in the City where Class I or II bikeways are not feasible and where an essential regional bicycle route connection is missing.

#### ***Program 5.A***

Inventory existing major arterial streets for missing regional bicycle route links and designate Class III bikeways only where Class I or II facilities are not feasible

### **Policy 6**

The City shall participate in regional trail planning programs.

#### ***Program 6.A***

Dedicate and formalize all trails within the City and pursue opportunities to obtain additional trail corridors where feasible.

#### ***Program 6.B***

Prepare and implement a 5-year trails improvement plan and budget, with the goal of completing trails identified on the General Plan Trails Map.

#### ***Program 6.C***

Develop trailheads where appropriate and when warranted to facilitate trail access.

**Policy 7**

Lands designated for Mountain Reserve (MR) shall be accessible for hiking, equestrian, and non-motorized biking trails, if sensitive biological resources are protected.

**Policy 8**

Trails shall not encroach upon bighorn sheep lambing areas and shall be designed to minimize impacts to sensitive biological resources.

**Policy 9**

Through coordination with the local utilities, service providers, and the Coachella Valley Water District, the City shall maximize the use of flood control and utility easement areas for inclusion in a multi-use trail system providing alternative transportation links to parks and open space areas.

***Program 9.A***

Confer and coordinate with the Coachella Valley Water District and utility purveyors to integrate, as practical, a multiple use trail system that links City parks with open space and conservation areas.

**Policy 10**

The City shall evaluate the feasibility of developing interpretive displays in the City.



**CONSERVATION AND  
OPEN SPACE ELEMENT**

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## **BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

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### **PURPOSE**

The Biological Resources section identifies the valuable biological resources within Rancho Mirage and the surrounding area. This section also establishes goals, policies, and programs to utilize and conserve these resources for the benefit of the entire community. The section is intended to provide a basis for understanding biological resource issues and guide decision makers in regulating land use and development, while protecting these critical community resources. More detailed information on Biological Resources in Rancho Mirage is contained in the General Plan Environmental Impact Report.

The issues discussed in the Biological Resources section have a direct and vital relationship with the Land Use and Community Design Elements, as well as other sections of the Open Space and Conservation Element to ensure a balance of land development with a conservation of biological resources. Local biological resources have also proven important market assets for Rancho Mirage, which has adopted a wildlife icon, the Peninsular Bighorn, as its community icon. In this regard, the Biological Resources section also has an influence on the effective implementation of economic development goals, policies, and programs.

### **BACKGROUND**

Rancho Mirage is located in one of the hottest and driest parts of the country. Distinguished by its low elevation, mild winters, and extreme aridity, only Death Valley is subject to more extreme conditions. The combination of a valley basin with expansive and varying geography and habitats and the complexity of various habitat transition zones makes the region a rich resource area. Rancho Mirage and the surrounding area comprise one of the most biologically unique and diverse regions in the country.

Although the desert floor supports sparse vegetation limited by heat and aridity, the climate of the City and region becomes milder and supports more vegetation with increasing elevation. Canyons and springs support native fan palm communities and a variety of plants and animals. Mountain and hill areas contain natural preserves, such as the Magnesia Springs Ecological Reserve in the Santa Rosa Mountains and the Edom Hill Area.

### **Habitats in Rancho Mirage**

Biological resources are found in and are integral parts of a habitat, an ecological system or network of interrelationships between living things. Habitat values are controlled by tolerable climate, a varied terrain, adequate space, a dependable food and water supply, soils for healthy plant growth, and shelter and nesting sites. An animal may live across habitat lines to meet all of its needs. Rancho Mirage contains five types of habitat, each of which is explained below.





### **Valley Floor/Blowsand Habitats**

The valley floor generally extends from the foot of Edom Hill in the City's Sphere of Influence to the Santa Rosa Mountains in the southern portion of the City. The valley floor is characterized by aeolian or blowsand habitats comprised of shifting, windblown sand supporting sparse vegetation. The blowsand habitats of the valley floor are critical to a number of special status animal and plant species, such as the Coachella Valley Fringe-toed Lizard, flat-tailed horned lizard, flat-seeded spurge and Coachella Valley milk vetch. The common plant community occurring in the desert dunes and sand fields of the valley floor is the Sonoran Desert creosote bush scrub. The blowsand habitats of Rancho Mirage have felt considerable impacts from urbanization.

### **Alluvial Plains Habitat**

Sonoran mixed woody and succulent scrub is the dominant plant community on flood formed fans and shallow slopes at the base of rocky hills (bajadas) that extend from canyon mouths to the desert floor. These alluvial habitats are formed by a variety of mountain drainages, including Magnesia Springs Canyon, Bradley Canyon, and smaller canyons forming alluvial fans, terraces, and washes. The surface and habitat conditions change on these sloping plains with increasing distance from canyon mouths.

Other plants of alluvial plain habitats are typical of the Colorado Desert and include creosote bush joined by nine species of cacti and a variety of woody and herbaceous plants. The roughly 93 species of annuals occurring here can make up more than half of the alluvial slopes flora. Cacti are one of the most striking of the alluvial slopes' plants, ranging from flat-stemmed species such as of the beavertail cactus to the thin and intricately branched pencil cholla. Larger woody shrubs also occurring here include the palo verde.

### **Desert Dry Wash Habitat**

As with the alluvial plains habitat, the City has limited desert wash areas remaining to support the wildlife associated with this type of habitat. As washes emerge from canyon mouths, they cut a channel into the alluvial slope, which broadens and branches out into intertwined or braided washes. The Whitewater River, the largest desert wash in the City, drains large areas of the San Jacinto, Santa Rosa, and San Bernardino Mountains. This "managed" drainage still harbors a variety of plants and wildlife, although habitat areas are regularly disturbed and/or eliminated in the course of periodic channel maintenance.

A wide variety of species occupy the desert dry washes, but only a limited number are consistently associated with this habitat, with trees and large shrubs accounting for most of the characteristic species. Palo verde, with its green trunk and branches, typically dominates desert wash habitat, but is limited in the City.

Smoketree, a member of the pea family, is more common and has been encouraged in areas scoured by storm runoff. The absence of certain shallow rooted species, particularly cacti, is due to their easy removal by stormwaters and their slow growth rate and reestablishment.

### **Desert Fan Palm Oasis Woodland**

The desert fan palm oasis woodland is a plant community that has been given special status by the State as one with the highest inventory priority. It is mainly characterized by groves of native desert fan palms that can grow to more than 90 feet. Rancho Mirage has one example of this plant community in Magnesia Springs Canyon.

A variety of animal species are associated with the desert fan palm community, such as the southern yellow bat, common kingsnake, desert slender salamander, California treefrog, hooded oriole, Cooper's hawk, golden eagle, and prairie falcon. One of the most important animals supported by this habitat is the Peninsular Bighorn sheep, which visit, especially during the summer months, to take advantage of the water source supporting the woodland.

### **Rocky Slopes Habitat**

Rocky slope habitats occurring within and near the City are associated with the foothills of the Santa Rosa Mountains and extend from the edge of alluvial plains to an elevation of about 2,500 feet. The habitat is typified by unrelieved rock, weathered and fractured as exposed bedrock and as loose debris of stone, pebbles, and sand. While vegetation appears deceptively sparse, this habitat supports hundreds of perennial and annual species. Plant size and densities increase with higher elevation and greater annual rainfall.

Common perennials include creosote bush, brittlebush, burrobush, and agave. Agave is a particularly striking plant with a compact basal rosette of large succulent leaves, which send up a single central flower bearing stalk that bears yellow flowers and can reach a height of more than 20 feet. Ocotillo are also common in this habitat.

### **Sensitive, Rare, and Endangered Species**

Rancho Mirage and its Sphere of Influence are host to a wide variety of sensitive and special status plant and animal species, some of which have been listed as threatened or endangered by the federal and/or state governments. "Threatened" refers to species whose numbers have dropped to such low levels and/or whose populations are so isolated that the continuation of the species is jeopardized. "Endangered" species are those with such limited numbers or subject to extreme circumstances that their extinction is a real possibility. Some examples of threatened and endangered species in the City and its Sphere of Influence include the Coachella Valley Fringe-toed lizard, desert slender salamander, desert tortoise, Peregrine falcon, Southwestern Willow flycatcher, Least Bell's vireo, and Peninsular Bighorn sheep. "Rare" and "sensitive" species are those determined to be less sensitive to impacts and where their continuation does not appear significantly threatened. For a list of these species and their habitat, see the General Plan Environmental Impact Report.

### **Habitat Management**

A significant amount of open space exists within the City boundaries and City's Sphere of Influence where protecting biological resources is an important task. These resources are pivotal to defining the character of Rancho Mirage and the surrounding area. Several agencies, organizations, and methods are involved in the preservation of biological resources in Rancho Mirage.





### **Magnesia Springs Ecological Reserve**

The California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) manages the Magnesia Springs Ecological Reserve. The reserve is located within Magnesia Springs Canyon in the Santa Rosa Mountains. The DFG manages the reserve to assure the protection of a vital water source critical to survival of the Peninsular Bighorn sheep in the hot summer months. During the summer months, the DFG restricts entry into the Magnesia Springs area to prevent disturbance of sheep accessing this water source. The water source is also used by other wildlife in the surrounding area as well as a variety of other sensitive species during the summer months, including the Least Bell's vireo, Southwestern Willow flycatcher, and prairie falcon.

### **Edom Hill Conservation Area**

The Edom Hill Conservation Area (EDCA) is located immediately northwest of the City's Sphere of Influence. It is an important preserve for the Coachella Valley Fringe-toed Lizard and other sensitive species. Its unique mix of habitats is dependent on a high groundwater table directed toward the surface by diking associated with the San Andreas Fault. The EDCA is comprised of shifting sand dunes, mesquite thickets, palm oases, and sand fields that provide important habitat for nesting and foraging birds, a variety of mammals, lizards, and invertebrates. Exhibit V-4, Habitat Management Areas, shows the location of the Edom Hill Conservation Area.

### **Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument**

The Santa Rosa Mountains are part of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument, which have been recognized by the U.S. Congress as a place containing "... nationally significant biological, cultural, recreational, geological, educational, and scientific values. Congress also recognizes that "the magnificent vistas, wildlife, land forms, and natural and cultural resources of these mountains occupy a unique and challenging position given their proximity to highly urbanized areas of the Coachella Valley." These mountains, managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service, provide a natural scenic backdrop to the desert communities of the Coachella Valley. As a nationally recognized resource located within the City, the Santa Rosa Mountains deserve long-term planning and protection including its valuable wildlife and scenic resources and for the enjoyment of all Americans. The National Monument Visitors Center, located on Highway 74 near the mountain foothills, provides exhibits and information on the mountain's resources, as well as gardens of indigenous and ethnographically important plants. Exhibit V-4 shows the location of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Area that is within the City.

### **Rancho Mirage Mountain Reserve**

The City of Rancho Mirage was the first in the Coachella Valley to establish a mountain reserve within its City limits. This was accomplished through a series of land transfers and the granting of conservation easements. Originally established to address the habitat preservation needs of the Peninsular Bighorn sheep, the conservation issues have been broadened to include other biological resources. The City's Mountain Reserve area is part of the Santa Rosa Mountains and encompasses approximately 5,182 acres including small canyons and washes and extensive rocky and rough terrain supporting the bighorn and a wide variety of plant and animal life. See the General Plan Land Use Plan for the location of Mountain Reserve area in the City.

## **Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and Natural Community Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP/NCCP)**

Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) and Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs) are fast becoming the principle management strategies for biological resources. According to the NCCP Act of 2002, natural community conservation planning is used as a tool to reduce conflicts between the protection of the State's wildlife heritage and the reasonable use of natural resources for economic development. HCPs are intended to reduce conflicts between listed species and development activities while offsetting any harmful effects to these species by setting aside land for conservation and identifying suitable land for development.

The Coachella Valley Fringe-toed Lizard HCP, approved in 1986 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, was the second and one of the most successful HCPs in the United States. This plan created three reserves to protect the Coachella Valley Fringe-toed Lizard, which is a State endangered and federally threatened species. However, other species continued to be impacted by the growth of the Coachella Valley. In late 1995 and early 1996, the City of Rancho Mirage along with other members of the Coachella Valley Association of Governments and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, and the National Park Service agreed to a planning effort to prepare a Multiple Species HCP. The agreement was amended in late 1996 and early 1997 to include a plan to prepare a Natural Community Conservation Plan.

In December 2003, CVAG approved an administrative draft of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and Natural Community Conservation Plan. This plan covers approximately 1.1 million acres in the Coachella Valley and surrounding mountains. In Rancho Mirage, the draft plan covers the Santa Rosa Mountains and correspond essentially to the mountain and hillside reserve designations. The plan excludes Indian reservation lands; of the seven Indian reservations in the plan's area, only the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation is the subject of a tribal Multiple Species HCP. The CVMSHCP/NCCP addresses a wide range of species and habitat protection issues for the region with approximately 27 sensitive and listed species proposed for coverage as well as the conservation of 27 natural communities. The City of Rancho Mirage represents approximately 1 percent, or 15,760 acres of the area covered by the plan. Exhibit V-4 shows the location of the Conservation Areas within the City.

### **Regional Wildlife Corridors**

Rancho Mirage offers limited opportunities for the preservation of wildlife migration corridors due to the pattern of transportation and urban development that has evolved over the past few decades. East west wildlife corridors include the relatively pristine Santa Rosa Mountains, the Edom Hill/Indio Hills area, and to a lesser extent, the Whitewater River. Cooperative efforts should be made with the Coachella Valley Water District, the agency responsible for managing the Whitewater River, to maximize the habitat and migration corridor value of this area.



**CONSERVATION AND  
OPEN SPACE ELEMENT**

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**CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT AREAS**

 Coachella Valley Mountain Conservancy (CVMC) Area of Interest; Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument

Conservation Areas within the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP/NCCP)

 Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains Conservation Area

 Edom Hill Conservation Area

 Thousand Palms Conservation Area

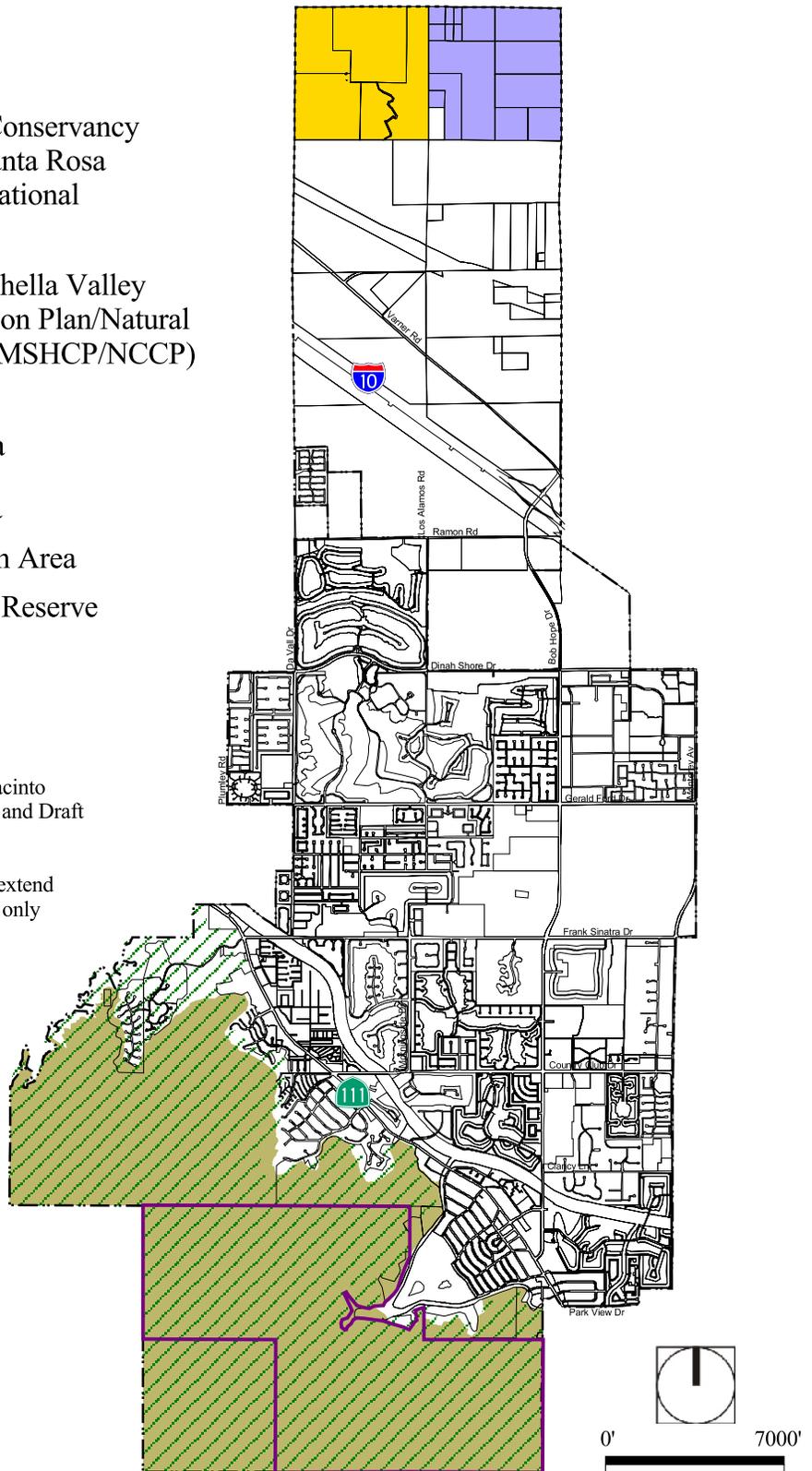
 Magnesia Springs Ecological Reserve

 City Limits

 Sphere of Influence

Source: March 2003 - Draft Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report

Note: Both the CVMC and SRMNSA boundaries extend beyond the Rancho Mirage City Limits. This map only depicts the land in Rancho Mirage.



**CONSERVATION AND  
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## **GOALS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS**

The City of Rancho Mirage is in the responsible position of preserving much of its remaining unique and valuable biological resources, especially those in the Santa Rosa Mountains. The City should also coordinate with and encourage Riverside County and CVAG to preserve the remaining resources within Edom Hill. The City and its residents have demonstrated strong support for these integral parts of the Coachella Valley environment. In every facet of community planning and development regulation, the City will have the responsibility to manage growth and limit impacts. This will be accomplished through the thoughtful implementation of the General Plan and the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances. It can also be accomplished through the integration of the biological resource and open space/conservation principles in public works projects, including road and highway development and the design and construction of stormwater detention basins and drainage basins. Development on every level will provide an opportunity to protect and enhance the City's biological resources.

For remaining developable areas, however, a major potential impact of urbanization has been the clearing of the land along with its natural habitat communities. Whether development involves one house on a large lot, a large subdivision, or a master planned residential community, the native vegetation and its inherent wildlife habitat value are completely removed. Where landscaping has been introduced, exotic and other non native plants prevail. These not only have little or no habitat value for native animals and birds, but they can "escape" and compete with native plants for nutrients and water in the wild. The City should control the use of certain non native and invasive plant species that compete with native vegetation and require that new development, whether public or private, utilize native trees and shrubs in landscape plans to the greatest extent possible, including plants salvaged on-site. This may include encouraging the use of link course designs in new golf courses with non-play areas landscaped with native vegetation.

### **GOAL 1**

The protection and preservation of biological resources within Rancho Mirage, especially sensitive and special status wildlife species and their natural habitats.

#### **Policy 1**

The City shall support and participate in local and regional efforts to evaluate and protect natural habitats, including suitable habitats for rare and endangered species occurring in the City and the vicinity.

##### ***Program 1.A***

Review and evaluate all development proposals on vacant lands for their impacts on existing habitats and wildlife.

##### ***Program 1.B***

Maintain an accurate and regularly updated map and information base on sensitive species and habitats in Rancho Mirage and the vicinity.





***Program 1.C***

Continue to participate in the development and implementation of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and Natural Community Conservation Plan with special emphasis on habitats located in the Edom Hill and Santa Rosa Mountain areas.

***Program 1.D***

Continue to require new developments to prepare wildlife and plant surveys and implement the requirements of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and Natural Community Conservation Plan.

**Policy 2**

The City shall encourage and promote an understanding and appreciation of sensitive biological resources in Rancho Mirage and the vicinity.

***Program 2.A***

Provide developers direction and information on preservation and reuse of valuable topsoil and use of locally appropriate xeriscape design concepts.

***Program 2.B***

Discourage unnecessary clearing of native desert landscape.

***Program 2.C***

Explore the feasibility and appropriateness of establishing an interpretive trail system in the City's mountain preserve or other similar area to enhance the public appreciation for the natural resources within the City.

**Policy 3**

The City shall encourage the use of naturally occurring desert plant materials and discourage the use of non native plant materials that are harmful to native plant and animal species in landscaping for development projects to the greatest extent possible.

***Program 3.A***

Request that developers salvage naturally occurring desert plant materials, to the greatest extent possible, for integration into project landscaping as a way to provide or enhance wildlife habitat and to extend the local desert environment into the urban design of the City. Incorporate these indigenous materials into project landscape plans, which shall be submitted to the City for approval.

***Program 3.B***

Prepare a comprehensive planting materials list, which shall include native and non native, drought tolerant trees, shrubs, and groundcovers that complement the local environment, provide habitat for local wildlife, and extend the desert into the built environment. A list of prohibited plant materials shall also be prepared.

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## **ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES**

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### **PURPOSE**

This section of the Open Space and Conservation Element addresses the need for conservation, diverse development, and thoughtful use and management of energy and mineral resources. All minerals and most energy resources are finite and limited. The household demand for energy resources in Rancho Mirage and the Coachella Valley is relatively high, and escalating energy prices have placed serious burdens on residents and businesses alike. The purpose of this section is to set forth goals, policies, and programs that are responsive to the community's dependency on these limited natural resources. Issues of resource production, transmission, and use are also discussed, as are the major opportunities faced by the City and regional governments for more local control of these resources.

### **BACKGROUND**

Rancho Mirage residents and businesses draw upon a variety of natural resources for energy needs. With the exception of a small amount of electrical energy being generated from nuclear and renewable resources, non renewable fossil fuels are depended upon for the generation of electricity, the heating of homes, and the operation of vehicles.

#### **Electric Power Services**

Cost competitive electrical power is essential to the community if it is to attract new residents and businesses. The cost of electricity can represent a substantial portion of business operations. The preservation of affordable electricity through reasonable rates and energy conservation incentives is essential to the continued growth and success of Rancho Mirage businesses. The impact of the high cost of electrical energy is further compounded in the desert by air conditioning needs during summer months.

In Rancho Mirage, electric power services are provided primarily by the Southern California Edison Company (SCE), with a limited portion of the northeast quadrant of the City within the service district of the Imperial Irrigation District. Electricity is transmitted to the City primarily through high voltage lines and step down transformers at the Devers substation near Desert Hot Springs and substations located within the City. Currently, there is no power generation within the City.

#### **Natural Gas Service**

Although it is a non-renewable resource and generates a range of air pollutants, natural gas is generally considered a clean and efficient fuel and is preferable to many other non-renewable resources such as oil. Natural gas has been adopted as the fuel of choice by the Sunline Transit Authority, which now operates its entire fleet on compressed natural gas (CNG). The College of the Desert has an educational certificate program in the repair and maintenance of CNG vehicles, providing the first such college level certification in California. Additionally, the Eisenhower Medical Center operates a natural-gas cogeneration plant, which provides heating, cooling, and power for the campus.





The City is located within the service district of the Southern California Gas Company (The Gas Company). The Gas Company has developed a wide range of energy management, conservation, and equipment retrofit programs for its customer base. Assistance in facilities planning and analysis is also provided to maximize energy efficiency and cost effective equipment purchases and operations.

### **Local Renewable Energy Resources**

The two major and potentially significant alternative energy resources within the Rancho Mirage area are solar and wind energy. The region has one of the highest insolation (sunshine) values in the United States and is the site of major energy installations. Solar energy, primarily in the form of thermal systems, is now widely used in the Coachella Valley.

The costs of producing and installing solar photovoltaic systems, which involve the direct conversion of sunshine to electricity, have been dramatically reduced in recent years. The application of these systems has been seen in some small commercial sites that have made these sites self-sufficient. As new development occurs within the City, the use of photovoltaic systems should be encouraged. Solar thermal systems have meanwhile been in use all over the world for many years and are widely applied in the Coachella Valley to provide domestic hot water and to heat swimming pools. Passive solar designs are also being used to provide natural lighting and space heating. Rancho Mirage is well situated to take advantage of the continued emergence and refinement of solar technologies, with intense insolation levels for both solar thermal and photovoltaic systems.



Hundreds of wind turbines dot the desert landscape around Rancho Mirage, providing renewable energy as well as unique landmarks.

Wind energy is another locally abundant renewable energy resource. The San Geronio Pass, including the Edom Hill resource area, is one of the world's most successful wind energy production sites, with the potential to provide over 3,000 megawatts of clean and renewable electrical generating capacity. The cost of wind generated electricity is now competitive with electricity generated by coal or natural gas. Moreover, it is generally conceded that the true costs of energy from fossil or nuclear fuels are not yet fully factored into their market price. The performance of commercial scale turbine development on the western slope of Edom Hill,

immediately west of the Sphere of Influence, would appear to indicate that the use of wind will continue to expand. As the many costs associated with the use of fossil fuels continue to rise, renewable alternatives such as wind will become progressively more desirable and cost effective to develop. All wind-generated electricity in the Coachella Valley is currently sold to SCE and other distributing companies.

### **Mineral Resources**

The nonrenewable character of mineral deposits requires their careful and efficient development to prevent unnecessary waste or exploitation. The excavation of mineral resources can also have significant environmental impacts that may only be marginally mitigated by surface mining reclamation plans. Earth damage from mining, particularly surface mining in desert areas, can remain for centuries if not properly reclaimed through extensive importing of fill, grading, and replanting.

In the Coachella Valley, the deep fault controlled valley has filled in with eroded materials from the surrounding hills and mountains to a depth in excess of 12,000 feet within the City and its Sphere of Influence. As a consequence, the mineral resources of the desert floor are limited to sands and gravel, important deposits of which occur within the City's Sphere of Influence. There are currently no mines or extraction sites within the City.

## **Waste Management and Recycling**

On average, Americans produce over four pounds of trash every day. As available space in and for landfills is becoming scarce and more distant, cities have been mandated to manage waste and reduce their solid waste volume. The City has, therefore, teamed up with Waste Management of the Desert (WM) to implement a citywide recycling program. Currently, the program includes both commercial and residential recycling through a separate bin, co-mingled collection. Through this program, WM collected over 4,732,000 pounds or recyclable materials in 2003. To assist residents and business owners, WM produces a Recycling Guide that explains what type of waste should be recycled, what should be taken to a household hazardous waste site, and what should be discarded.

With the closure of the Edom Hill Sanitary Landfill in 2004, WM now operates the Edom Hill Recycling and Transfer Station, which will accept and recycle or transfer waste from the City to other landfills, such as the Lamb Canyon and Badlands Landfills.



## **GOALS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS**

The City has an important and meaningful role in encouraging the wise use of energy resources. Encouraging the development and use of alternative and renewable energy can also expand economic opportunity and provide environmental enhancement. Additionally, the Green Building policies and programs contained in the Community Design Element encourage the construction of buildings that minimize energy use and maximize energy conservation.

The City also has an important long term role in helping assure the availability of important sand and gravel resources located in the Sphere of Influence. Future resource needs must be kept in mind when land use or development planning has the potential to adversely affect these important mineral resources.

### **GOAL 1**

The conservation, efficient use, and thoughtful management of energy sources and mineral deposits.

### **GOAL 2**

The long-term viability of limited and non renewable resources.

### **Policy 1**

The City shall promote energy efficiency and conservation in all areas of community development, including transportation, development planning, and public and private sector construction and operation, as well as in the full range of residential and non-residential projects.



***Program 1.A***

Participate in the energy management and conservation efforts of Sunline Transit Authority and encourage the expanded use of compressed natural gas, buses with bike racks, and other system improvements that enhance overall energy efficiency and conservation.

***Program 1.B***

To the extent practical, monitor and influence development in the vicinity of significant mineral resources occurring within the City's Sphere of Influence.

**Policy 2**

The General Plan and other community plans shall assure an efficient circulation system and land use pattern in the City.

***Program 2.A***

Require development to design and locate convenient neighborhood shopping and medical and other professional services to minimize travel and facilitate the use of alternative means of transportation.

**Policy 3**

Major developments that provide significant employment centers shall be required to provide convenient and safe access to the public transit system.

**Policy 4**

The City shall proactively support the affordable and reliable production and delivery of electrical power to the community.

**Policy 5**

The City shall support public and private efforts to develop and operate alternative systems of solar and electrical production that take advantage of local renewable resources.

***Program 5.A***

Coordinate with the County on the use and designation of appropriate lands on Edom Hill to allow and facilitate their development as windfarms to the extent practical, consistent with the City's standards regarding viewshed protection.

***Program 5.B***

Support and facilitate the integration of cogeneration and other energy management systems into commercial operations in the City to enhance operational efficiencies and provide additional opportunities for local power production.

**Policy 6**

The City shall encourage the reduction and recycling of household and business waste.

***Program 6.A***

Educate City residents and business operators on the benefits of reducing, reusing, and recycling household and business waste.

***Program 6.B***

Coordinate with the City's solid waste disposal contractor, as well as other contractors, to continue and enhance the City's recycling program.

***Program 6.C***

Encourage all restaurants, hotels, and businesses to participate in the collection of commercial recyclables. Commercial recyclables include, but are not limited to food waste, cardboard, metals, plastics, paper products, glass, or any other recyclable product for which a viable market can be found.

***Program 6.D***

Ensure that any planned construction, demolition, addition, alteration, repair, remodel, landscaping, or grading projects divert all reusable, salvageable, and recyclable debris from landfill disposal.



**CONSERVATION AND  
OPEN SPACE ELEMENT**

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## **WATER QUALITY AND RESOURCES**

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### **PURPOSE**

This section of the Open Space and Conservation Element addresses issues of water quality and availability for current and future needs. An important aspect of this section is the coordination and cooperation between the City, the Coachella Valley Water District, and other agencies responsible for supplying water to the area. Wastewater management has also become an increasingly important part of water management that is essential to the protection of groundwater resources. The goals, policies, and programs set forth in this section point staff and City officials toward effective management of this essential resource.

The Water Quality and Resources section has a direct relationship to the Land Use Element, which has evolved to a major degree in response to the availability of water resources.

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Domestic Water Resources**

##### **Water Supply and Demand**

Domestic water service is provided by the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD), which utilizes wells to extract groundwater from the Whitewater River subbasin. Water quality in the Coachella Valley, according to the CVWD's 2003 Annual Review, is of extremely high quality, healthful, and meets all government standards. This subbasin groundwater resource has a limited supply of natural recharge that includes infiltration of runoff from the San Jacinto, Santa Rosa, and San Bernardino Mountains. Its recharge is also supplemented in part via imported water carried by the Metropolitan Water District aqueduct.

Supplemental water for the Coachella Valley is assured through the year 2035 through various agreements and pacts that have been entered into between different agencies and CVWD. As the City continues to develop, it could increase citywide total domestic water demand to approximately 27 million gallons per day within the City. Impacts that are project specific may be more or less on a per meter basis, depending on the type of development, the density in residential developments, and the level and type of landscaping and water dependent amenities within each project.

As demand generated by residential and golf course development continues to increase, the ongoing overdraft will generate progressively greater significant long term cumulative impacts on the groundwater supply. While the provision of recharge water has greatly reduced the rate of overdraft, development in the Coachella Valley is expected to continue to reduce the amount of potable groundwater in storage.

To further reduce the impacts of development on groundwater supplies, the CVWD (and DWA) has implemented wastewater reclamation strategies to utilize tertiary treated



#### **CVWD Water Management Plan**

In September 2002, the CVWD adopted a Water Management Plan that calls for:

- ◆ 10% reduction in urban water use by 2010.
- ◆ 5% reduction in golf course use by 2010.
- ◆ 7% reduction in agricultural use by 2015.



wastewater for golf course, landscape, and other irrigation purposes within the Coachella Valley. The Palm Desert treatment plant has installed additional wastewater treatment facilities providing the District with 10 million gallons a day (mgd) capacity for tertiary treatment. Currently, CVWD tertiary treatment from the Cook Street plant averages about 8 mgd and on site storage has been developed to assure availability. Unfortunately, due to the high cost associated with expanding the system, reclaimed water is currently not available to the City. Still, with the need to preserve groundwater levels and the increasing demand for water, the future use of reclaimed water in Rancho Mirage should not be overlooked.

### **Water Management**

#### ***Coachella Valley Water District Water Management Plan***

As the primary water purveyor for the Coachella Valley, CVWD's goal is to provide adequate quantities of safe, high-quality water at the lowest cost to District water users. The District adopted the Coachella Valley Water District Water Management Plan in September 2002. This plan provides specifics on the current water conditions within the Coachella Valley as well as a detailed management plan that includes water production and supplies, groundwater recharge, cooperative agreements, conservation, and water quality.

#### ***California Regional Water Quality Control Board Water Quality Control Plan***

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board (WQCB) implements federal and state laws established to assure planning, implementation, management, and enforcement activities take place to maintain and improve water quality. The Colorado River Basin Region (Region 7) of the WQCB adopted a regional Water Quality Control Plan to provide definitive guidelines and give direction to WQCB activities to optimize the beneficial use of state waters by preserving and protecting the quality of these waters.

### **Water Conservation**

Water conservation is essential as both a short term and long term resource management strategy. With increasing demands on a water supply in overdraft, continuing efforts to reduce per capita consumption are a priority. One of the best opportunities for water conservation has been in the area of landscape design and maintenance. Fortunately, City residents have shown an appreciation for the native desert environment and the excellent opportunity it provides to reduce the use of turf grasses and other types of heavily water dependent landscaping. The City has adopted a water-conserving landscape ordinance as required by State law, which requires that new landscape plans be designed to incorporate more native and locally compatible drought tolerant planting materials and efficient irrigation systems.

### **Water Quality Protection**

One area of recent concern in the Coachella Valley and the Rancho Mirage area has been the impact of long term septic tank use on groundwater resources. Contamination problems have been particularly evident at the lower portion of alluvial cones with extensive upslope residential development. The use of septic tanks in these generally porous soils and on sloping gradients has resulted in concentrated flows of effluent to the lower portions of these areas and has resulted in contamination of the water table. Septic tanks are still in use in Rancho Mirage and their use will continue to pose varying threats to groundwater. To assure the continued protection of the high quality of water resources, the City requires all

properties within 200 feet of a sewer line to abandon all septic tanks, seepage pits, or cesspools and connect to the public sanitary sewer.

## **GOALS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS**

The wise use and conservation of water resources will be a continuing central theme of community development planning in southern California. Rancho Mirage and other local communities have developed programs to extend the use of efficient landscape and irrigation design and to encourage the use of water efficient appliances and fixtures in homes and businesses.

The City also has an important role to play in the long term protection of this finite and ever more valuable resource. Groundwater resource subbasins do not respect jurisdictional lines, and the threat of pollution or contamination of groundwater must be viewed on a regional as well as a local level. Effective future stormwater management will also help protect groundwater and preserve capacity in stormwater facilities. Protection of our major mountain watersheds will assure preservation of a viable long term source of natural groundwater recharge to the City and the larger subbasin.

### **GOAL 1**

A dependable, long-term supply of clean and healthful domestic water to meet the needs of all segments of the community.

### **GOAL 2**

An informed public that respects the City's finite water resource and maximizes protection and conservation efforts for the benefit of the entire community.

#### **Policy 1**

To the greatest extent practical, the City shall encourage the use of drought tolerant landscaping as a means of reducing water demand.

##### ***Program 1.A***

Strengthen education and public relations programs related to water protection and conservation. Coordinate and cooperate with CVWD in the continued development of educational materials and programs that encourage and facilitate water conservation throughout the community.

##### ***Program 1.B***

Continue implementation of the water conservation landscape ordinance by requiring the use of natural and drought resistant planting materials and efficient irrigation systems.

#### **Policy 2**

The City shall evaluate all proposed land use and development plans for their potential to create groundwater contamination hazards from point and non point sources and confer with other appropriate agencies to assure adequate review.





**Policy 3**

The City shall require sewer connections at the point of sale of property whenever a sewer line is constructed within 200 feet of the property.

**Policy 4**

The City shall require the use of alternative water supplies, such as recycled or canal water, for urban irrigation, where available.

***Program 4.A***

Encourage the expansion of CVWD's recycled water infrastructure to allow for the use of recycled water in Rancho Mirage.

**Policy 5**

New developments shall establish and confirm the ability to meet current and future water resource demands.

***Program 5.A***

Require a water supply assessment and verification for applicable new developments per State law.

***Program 5.B***

Facilitate and require the use of water conserving appliances, fixtures, and plumbing in all new development.

***Program 5.C***

Provide information on the use of low flush toilets and low flow showerheads and faucets. Require the application of water conserving technologies in conformance with State law.

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## ARCHEOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

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### PURPOSE

The Archaeological and Historic Resources section is meant to provide a summary of the cultural and historical traditions of the City of Rancho Mirage and vicinity. This section briefly describes the documented pre history and history of Rancho Mirage and sets forth goals, policies, and programs that preserve this heritage and help perpetuate it for future generations.

This section discusses important historical resources and sites that should be preserved through the plans and policies contained in the Land Use and Community Design Elements. Cultural traditions and artifacts are the most important links between the past, present, and future. They are the elements that bind communities together and are the common ground that provide community cohesiveness and historic and cultural perspective. A record of Rancho Mirage's history helps to preserve cultural heritage and provides a basis for planning present day cultural activities and traditions.

### BACKGROUND

#### Pre-European History of Rancho Mirage

The oldest cultural remains in the Rancho Mirage area date back about 1,500 years and are located in the Anza Borrego Indian Hill Rock Shelter. The oldest radiocarbon dated occupation in the Coachella Valley comes from the intersection of Washington Street and Highway 111, a site known as Point Happy. The artifact was a Patayan style broken pot dated to about 900 years ago. Numerous types of habitation and village sites developed throughout the area. These included villages occupied for extended periods of time, milling sites used seasonally as particular foods became available, lithic workshops and quarries for making stone tools and weapons, and rock art sites used for artistic and religious expression.

The Desert Cahuilla Indians had many villages throughout the Coachella Valley, including those associated with Ancient Lake Cahuilla until its disappearance 500 years ago. With the loss of the lake, the mountains and canyons became more important sources of water, food, and fiber. Today, a portion of the Cahuilla Indian population lives on parts of the Agua Caliente Reservation located in the Coachella Valley. A total of six Cahuilla cultural heritage sites have been identified within the City and one in the City's SOI. Several other sites are adjacent to or nearby. The Bradley Canyon Trail, Magnesia Spring, Edom Hill/Indio Hills, and Bradley Canyon are examples of these sites. A list of details and sites can be seen in the General Plan Environmental Impact Report.

#### Modern History of Rancho Mirage

The earliest European history of Rancho Mirage dates back to the first Spaniard making forays northward from Mexico along the coast and the Colorado River. Legend has it that Captain Juan Iturbe sailed a vessel into the Salton Sea and explored westerly as far as the Santa Rosa and Little San Bernardino Mountains area. The development of land routes to supply inland missions brought the Spanish into the region in the 1770's. In the 1800's, the

#### Cahuilla Cultural Heritage

One of the best compilations of records of Cahuilla cultural heritage sites is *The Cahuilla Landscape: The Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains*, by Lowell John Bean, Sylvia Brakke Vane, and Jackson Young.



Rancho Mirage area transitioned from Mexico to the California jurisdiction, with the first U.S. Government survey made in the Coachella Valley between 1855-56. From that time until the early 1920's, human activity was limited to the usage of the Bradshaw Trail and travelers passing through the area.

The promotion of Rancho Mirage as a destination desert community began as early as 1924 with efforts of R.P. "Bert" Davie and E.E. McIntyre, who purchased hundreds of acres from Southern Pacific Railroad. Shortly thereafter, Davie established a ranch house at Clancy Lane and built a north south thoroughfare to connect his new desert paradise to the Bradshaw Highway (present-day Highway 111). He named this road Rio del Sol (River of the Sun), which was later renamed Bob Hope Drive. Promoted as Rio del Sol Estates, the development became known as Little Santa Monica for the many new residents. Clancy Lane was named after Les M. and Helen Clancy, the first "gentleman farmers" to build their home in the development in 1932.

The name, "Rancho Mirage," was probably coined in 1934 when Louis Blankenhorn and Laurence Macomber launched a new real estate promotion on parcels in the area of Highway 111, Bob Hope Drive, and Indian Trail Drive. While this subdivision was quite successful, the demographic and activity center of the community continued to be Davie's Rio del Sol Estates through World War II. After the war, Ronald Button and Dave Culver created small subdivisions around the "original" Rancho Mirage along Highway 111, the first to be filed in 1946.

Post World War II also saw a new era in development that eventually gave Rancho Mirage its predominant image as a world class resort residential community, characterized by its high quality planned residential golf course developments. The first of these was Thunderbird Country Club, opened in 1951, and Tamarisk Country Club, which opened in 1952. It was not until 1971, with the opening of Desert Island Country Club and the completion of its first residential units in 1972, that a new country club community was developed in Rancho Mirage. Desert Island was also the location of the City's first City Council hearings after its incorporation in 1973.

### **Rancho Mirage Historic Sites**

The relatively recent development of Rancho Mirage has resulted in architectural resources that predominantly reflect the achievements of mid-century Modern architecture. Consequently, with so few buildings older than 50 years of age, no properties in Rancho Mirage were identified as historic resources listed in the California Inventory of Historic Resources database. Nevertheless, the City's 2003 Historic Resources Survey identified over 100 properties that are considered to be local architectural and historic resources. One property of particular note is Casa Chiquita, originally constructed circa 1934 adjacent to Clancy Lane. The oldest documented residence in the City, Casa Chiquita was disassembled in 2004 and reassembled adjacent to Whitewater Park. It will be maintained by the City and may be viewed by residents and visitors alike.

Fourteen of these properties are considered to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, with an additional three to become eligible when they become older than 50 years of age. Additionally, the Tamarisk Fairway on 10th is considered to be a potential historic district eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and includes eight individual properties (note: one of these properties is included in the aforementioned properties eligible for listing).

A list of the eligible properties can be found in the General Plan Environmental Impact Report. A complete list of the City's architectural and historic resources is provided in the City's 2003 Historic Resources Survey.

### **Cultural Resources Potential Map**

Based upon field and literature surveys conducted to date, a resource sensitivity map has been developed that identifies various prehistoric and historic resource areas within the City and its Sphere of Influence. Additional information can be made available on potentially sensitive archaeological resources areas by contacting the City Planning staff. The base data used to prepare the Cultural Resources Potential Map are not published in order to protect resources from disturbance, damage, or removal.

### **Tribal Consultation**

State law changed in 2004 to provide California Native American tribes an opportunity to influence local land use decisions at an early planning stage, for the purpose of protecting cultural places. Enacted through Senate Bill 18 (Burton), State law now requires local governments to consult with tribes prior to making certain planning decisions and provide notice to tribes at certain key points in the planning process.

These consultation and notice requirements apply to adoption and amendment of both general plans and specific plans, as well as when designating open space in the general plan, if the affected land contains a cultural place and if the affected tribe has requested public notice. The new law applies to federally and non-federally recognized State tribes and cultural places on both public and private lands.

The purpose of involving tribes at these early planning stages is to allow consideration of cultural places in the context of broad local land use policy, before individual site-specific, project-level land use decisions are made by a local government.

State law also adds California Native American tribes to the list of organizations that can acquire and hold conservation easements, on terms mutually satisfactory to the tribe and the landowner, for the purpose of protecting their cultural places.

## **GOALS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS**

It is the obligation of the City of Rancho Mirage to assure that every reasonable effort is made to locate, identify and evaluate archaeological, historical, and cultural sites within its jurisdiction. As time passes and the community continues to develop, opportunities for documenting and preserving archaeological and historic sites and artifacts will decrease. The City must determine what actions or development activities have the potential to adversely affect known or suspected sites of historic or cultural significance. The City should encourage research, documentation, and recordation to register appropriate sites and structures within the community and vicinity. The City's recently formed (2004) Historic Preservation Commission reviews and nominates historic resources for preservation. In this manner, positive action can be taken to identify, preserve, and pass on the important traditions and history of the community.



## **GOAL 1**

The preservation, maintenance, continuity, and enhancement of cultural heritage and resources in the City of Rancho Mirage, including historic and prehistoric cultural artifacts and traditions.

### **Policy 1**

The City shall exercise its responsibility to preserve archaeological, historical, and cultural sites.

#### ***Program 1.A***

An archaeological and historical resources database shall be established and maintained by the City.

#### ***Program 1.B***

Maintain a preservation ordinance to provide for the designation and protection of historic resources.

#### ***Program 1.C***

Create a historic preservation incentives program, such as enabling the use of Mills Act contracts to lower property taxes on designated resources.

#### ***Program 1.D***

Develop an education program to familiarize residents and visitors alike with the City's architectural and historical heritage.

### **Policy 2**

Development or land use proposals that have the potential to disturb or destroy sensitive cultural resources shall be evaluated by a qualified professional and appropriate mitigation measures shall be incorporated into project approvals, if necessary.

#### ***Program 2.A***

Encourage in-place preservation or the recovery and preservation of materials for later study and display when reviewing development proposals and cultural surveys that identify sensitive resources.

#### ***Program 2.B***

Perform an annual records search in the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) and California Historic Resources Information System (CHRIS) databases to determine the presence of potential cultural resources within the boundaries of the City and its Sphere of Influence.

#### ***Program 2.C***

Include California Native American tribes, if requested, in the permit review process for new development applications. A tribe must also be identified by the Native American Heritage Commission as a tribe with traditional lands or cultural places located within the City of Rancho Mirage and its Sphere of Influence.

**Policy 3**

The City shall ensure the protection of sensitive archaeological and historic resources from vandalism and illegal collection.

***Program 3.A***

Maintain mapping information and similar location oriented resources in a confidential manner and assure that only those with appropriate professional and organizational ties are provided access to these sensitive records.

**Policy 4**

The City shall support the listing of eligible properties, structures, or sites as potential historic landmarks and their inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

***Program 4.A***

Periodically review the historical and archaeological resources of the area in cooperation with local historical associations for possible application for status as a historical landmark or inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

***Program 4.B***

Conduct meetings with the Rancho Mirage Historic Preservation Commission, City staff, and elected officials to prioritize and propose action on the preservation and registration of important archaeological and historical resources in the community and vicinity.



**CONSERVATION AND  
OPEN SPACE ELEMENT**

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